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ABSTRACT

The handbook describes language examinations offered and examination systems administered by members of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). An introductory section describes the rationale behind the founding of the organization, lists its 22 current members, and states its aims and objectives. Subsequent sections detail the framework and working definitions of the five proficiency levels used for comparison of tests in European languages (French, Luxembourgish, Dutch, Danish, German, Catalan, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Norwegian, English, Finnish, Swedish), the ways in which various tests are used to set standards for educational or workplace purposes, the organization's statement of practice standards, and other projects of members. The main section of the handbook provides a brief introduction to each member organization and the details of its tests and the systems by which they are produced and administered. The final section is a glossary of language testing terms used throughout the guide. (MSE)

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ED 424 730

ALTE HANDBOOK

OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS AND EXAMINATION SYSTEMS

Descriptions of examinations offered and examination systems administered by members of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)

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ALTE

Prepared for the Members of ALTE by

EFL Division

The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

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This version covers developments in ALTE for the years 1990 to 1997 and will be updated at regular intervals.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I. THE SCOPE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to give a comprehensive introduction to ALTE, its member organisations, their joint aims and the projects they are involved in together.

The handbook is organised as follows. The Introduction to ALTE describes the rationale behind the founding of ALTE, lists its current membership and states its aims and objectives. The ALTE Framework gives details of the framework of levels for the comparison of tests in European languages, which has been ALTE's first major project, together with working definitions of the levels. The section on Recognition and Use details the way in which various tests are used to set standards for educational or workplace purposes. The ALTE Code of Practice is a statement of the standards which members of ALTE work to in providing and administering their tests. Other projects which members of ALTE are engaged in are then described, followed by the main section of this book, Examinations and Examination Systems, in which there is a brief introduction to each member organisation, together with details of their tests and the systems by which these are produced and administered. The final section is a Glossary of language testing terms used throughout the book.

II. INTRODUCTION TO ALTE

ALTE – The Association of Language Testers in Europe – is an association of institutions within Europe, each of which produces examinations and certification for language learners. Each member provides examinations of the language which is spoken as a mother tongue in their own country or region.

The concept of ALTE was initially formed by the Universities of Cambridge and Salamanca late in 1989, and at the first meeting of the association in 1990 there were eight founder members. Since then membership has grown so that there are now 18 institutional members, representing 15 European languages. These are as follows:

Alliance Française	**French**
Centre de Langues Luxembourg (CLL)	**Luxembourgish**
CITO	**Dutch**
Danish Language Testing Consortium	**Danish**
Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV)	**German**
Goethe-Institut	**German**
Generalitat de Catalunya (Direcció General de Política Lingüística)	**Catalan**
Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ)	**Irish**
Instituto Cervantes	**Spanish**
Universidad de Salamanca	**Spanish**
Universidade de Lisboa	**Portuguese**
Università per Stranieri, Perugia	**Italian**
Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal (CNaVT) (Universite Catholique de Louvain and Dutch Language Union)	**Dutch**
University of Athens	**Greek**
Universitetet i Bergen	**Norwegian**
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)	**English**
Jyvaskylan yliopisto	**Finnish**
Stockholms Universitet	**Swedish**

With the breaking down of international barriers between European states and increasing opportunities for the members of the workforce to move from one country to another, the need for transferability of qualifications is clear.

Employers and employees alike need to know what language qualifications gained in various countries mean – what the holder of a given certificate can actually be expected to be able to do – and how to make meaningful comparisons between qualifications gained in different states of the European Union. Employers need to know which particular language qualification it is realistic to demand when advertising a post, and employees have an interest in being able to rate their own present level of expertise and future training needs. Since 1990 the members of ALTE have been working together to devise a means of describing and comparing their examinations.

The principal objectives of ALTE are:

- to establish common levels of proficiency in order to promote the transnational recognition of certification in Europe;
- to establish common standards for all stages of the language-testing process: that is, for test development, task and item writing, test administration, marking and grading, reporting of test results, test analysis and reporting of findings;
- to collaborate on joint projects and in the exchange of ideas and know-how.

The first of these objectives is particularly relevant to the needs of the workforce. The goal of establishing common levels of proficiency is being pursued by means of a long-term 'ALTE Framework Project'. The first stage of this project was achieved in 1991 with the production of the first version of this book, containing descriptions of the general language examinations offered by all ALTE members. All the examinations included were described using the same format, and details given of recognition as educational or workplace qualifications, the relative importance attached to different skills, the testing focus of each paper, and the number and types of questions used. With the expansion of the membership of ALTE this document has been fully revised and updated.

The second of ALTE's objectives, that of establishing common standards for all stages of the language-testing process, is addressed in the Examination Systems section of this book. In making comparisons between qualifications in different languages it is important not only to establish the framework of levels on which the examinations can be placed, but to agree on the standards to which they are produced. Under the heading of 'Examination System', members of ALTE describe how their examinations are developed, and the quality control methods they employ. The Code of Practice specifies the conditions that members agree to.

The documentation of the language examinations and examination systems in this volume exists both to provide information which is of use in itself, and to serve as the descriptive foundation for a definition of the framework of levels of proficiency on which the examinations provided by members of ALTE can be placed.

2. THE ALTE FRAMEWORK

In developing a framework of levels for the comparison of language tests, ALTE members have drawn heavily on the work of the Council of Europe and, in recent years, ALTE as an association has been able to make its own contributions to a number of Council of Europe projects including the development of Vantage Level and work on the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching (see pages 12–13).

SPECIFICATION OF OBJECTIVES: WAYSTAGE AND THRESHOLD

The ALTE Framework comprises five main levels. The first two have been defined respectively as Waystage User and Threshold User, terms taken from the work of the Council of Europe. In 1971 the Council recognised the importance of dividing the task of learning a language into smaller units, each of which could be credited separately, and also the necessity of basing curricula on learners' needs rather than on language structures, as had previously been common practice. One of the major outcomes of this work is the Threshold Level specification (van Ek, 1975) which proposed a model for the description of language ability based on the principle that language teaching should provide learners with the means of meeting their personal communicative needs. A lower level specification was also produced, under the name Waystage Level. In 1991 revised and updated versions of both documents appeared as Threshold Level 1990 and Waystage Level 1990 (by J. A. van Ek and J. L. M. Trim, published by Council of Europe Press). These documents are now also available from Cambridge University Press (ISBNs 0-521-56707-8 and 0-521-56706-6).

Many of the members of ALTE also offer examinations at Level 3 and there was therefore considerable interest among ALTE members when the Council of Europe expressed an interest in producing a Level 3 description beyond Threshold. In 1995, ALTE agreed to co-sponsor the development of this level description, known as Vantage Level.

The development work, carried out by Trim and van Ek in 1996, adhered to the existing mould set for their earlier descriptions in order to maintain a coherent progression for the audience, and in general they set out to provide an objective 'as far above Threshold as Waystage is below it'.

Vantage Level is still in its piloting phase and as such has not yet been fully incorporated into the ALTE Framework in the same way as Waystage and Threshold. Nevertheless some aspects are clearly relevant to the definition of Level 3 in the ALTE Framework.

Vantage Level provides language users with an objective which takes them beyond the stage where they have acquired the minimal means needed to transact the business of everyday life and to make social contact with those they meet in another country. In linguistic terms, they will have at their disposal an expanded range of grammar and vocabulary as well as greater control of discourse and conversational strategies and greater socio-cultural awareness. This allows them to be more flexible in dealing with the unexpected and with the normal complexities of daily living, including use of their foreign language in the work place or for study purposes.

The ALTE Framework of Language Examinations is shown in table form on page 3 and includes the examinations provided by ALTE members at each of the five levels. All five ALTE levels are characterised in the summaries given below and for Levels One and Two reference is made to Waystage and Threshold. In general, the brief descriptions are divided into what the candidates can do receptively and what they can do in terms of production and interaction.

Examples, rather than full descriptions, of what users at each level can do are given.

ALTE LEVEL ONE – WAYSTAGE USER

Examinations provided by ALTE members at Level One are influenced by the Council of Europe's 'Waystage 90' specification. At this level, users are acquiring a general basic ability to communicate in a limited number of the most familiar situations in which language is used in everyday life. Users at this level need to be able to understand the main points of simple texts, many of which are of the kind needed for survival when travelling or going about in public in a foreign country. At this level, they are using language for survival and to gain basic points of information.

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Speaking

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can ask for goods in shops where goods are on display, and order a meal in a restaurant if dishes are either displayed or illustrated on the menu. They can book a hotel room (face to face) and ask simple questions of a host family. In a post office or bank, they can ask for basic services, and they can indicate the nature of a medical problem to a doctor, although they would probably need to supplement their explanation with gestures. On a guided tour they can understand simple information given in a predictable situation, but their ability to follow up with questions and requests for further information is very limited.

In the workplace they can state simple requirements within their own job area and pass on simple messages.

If studying, they can ask simple questions, for example to check instructions or ask for information, but cannot understand more than a very brief answer.

THE ALTE FRAMEWORK OF LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS

LEVEL 1 Waystage User	LEVEL 2 Threshold User	LEVEL 3 Independent User	LEVEL 4 Competent User	LEVEL 5 Good User
Català Certificat Internacional de Català. Nivell Bàsic (NB)	**Català** Certificat Internacional de Català. Nivell Llindar (NL)	-	-	-
Dansk Test 1	**Dansk** Test 2		**Dansk** Dansk prøve 2	
Deutsch Grundbaustein Deutsch als Fremdsprache (GBS DaF)	**Deutsch** Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)	-	**Deutsch** Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)	**Deutsch** Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP) Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS)
English Key English Test (KET)	**English** Preliminary English Test (PET)	**English** First Certificate in English (FCE)	**English** Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)	**English** Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
-	**Español** Certificado Inicial de Español (CIE)	**Español** Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)	-	**Español** Diploma Superior de Español (DSE)
Français Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 1 (CEFP1)	**Français** Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 2 (CEFP2)	**Français** Diplôme de Langue Française (DL)	**Français** Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes (DS)	**Français** Diplôme de Hautes Etudes Françaises (DHEF)
Gaeilge Réamhteastas Gaeilge (RTG)	**Gaeilge** Bunteastas Gaeilge (BTG)	-	-	-
-	Ελληνικά Βεβαίωση Ελληνομάθειας Vevaiosi Ellinomatheias	-	-	-
Italiano Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 1 (CELI 1)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 2 (CELI 2)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 3 (CELI 3)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 4 (CELI 4)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 5 (CELI 5)
Lëtzebuergesch Zertifikat Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (ZLaF)	**Lëtzebuergesch** Fiichten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (1DLaF)	**Lëtzebuergesch** Zweeten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (2DLaF)	-	**Lëtzebuergesch** Dräischten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch (3DL)
-	**Nederlands** Examen Elementaire Kennis (CNaVT)	**Nederlands** Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-I) Examen Basiskennis (CNaVT)	**Nederlands** Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II (NT2-II) Examen Uitgebreide Kennis (CNaVT)	-
-	**Norsk** Språkprøven i norsk for fremmedspråklige, Bokmål	-	**Norsk** Test i norsk for fremmedspråklige, Høyere nivå	-
-	**Português** Certificado de Língua Portuguesa (CELP)	-	**Português** Diploma de Língua Portuguesa (DELP)	-
Suomi Suomen kieli, perustaso 1	**Suomi** Suomen kieli, perustaso 2 - 3, keskitaso 1	**Suomi** Suomen kieli, keskitaso 4 - 5, ylin taso 6	**Suomi** Suomen kieli, ylin taso 6	**Suomi** Suomen kieli, ylin taso 7 - 8
-	-	-	**Svenska** Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)	**Svenska** Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)

Writing

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can write a simple fax or letter, for example to book a hotel room, and can fill in a form to register at a hotel or join a bank. They can write a brief factual note or a simple 'thank-you' letter.

In the workplace, also, they can write a message or request to a colleague of a simple routine type. They can note down instructions and requests such as clients' orders and delivery dates.

If studying, they can note down times, dates and places from classroom boards or notice boards.

RECEPTIVE SKILLS

Reading

In social and travel contexts, 'Waystage' users can read such things as road signs, store guides and simple written directions, price labels, names on product labels, common names of food on a standard sort of menu, bills, hotel signs, basic information from adverts for accommodation, signs in banks and post offices and on cash machines and notices related to use of the emergency services.

In the workplace, they can identify standard letters such as orders and enquiries, and derive basic information from factual texts within their own area of expertise. They can understand short, standard notices (e.g. 'No Smoking').

If studying, they can get basic information such as class times from notices, and make some limited use of sources of information such as computers and bilingual dictionaries. At this level users are unlikely to be able to study an academic subject through the medium of a foreign language, and are most likely to be studying the language itself.

Listening

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can understand such things as simple house rules such as meal-times and location of rooms, prices in shops, simple questions and instructions from a doctor, the cost and terms of renting a flat, simple directions on how to get to places and routine questions asked at Immigration.

In the workplace, they can understand simple instructions and receive a simple phone message in a familiar and predictable context.

If studying, they can follow a very simple presentation or demonstration, as long as it is illustrated with diagrams and examples, and in a familiar field of study. They can understand basic instructions about class times and dates and details about when assignments are to be carried out.

ALTE LEVEL TWO - THRESHOLD USER

Examinations provided by ALTE members at Level Two are influenced by the Council of Europe's 'Threshold 90' specification. At this level users should be able to cope linguistically in a range of everyday situations which require a largely predictable use of language. Much of what learners at this level can do involves a better understanding of the types of texts from which 'Waystage' users can derive only the most basic points of information. Understanding at Level 2 differs in that it goes beyond merely being able to pick out facts and may involve opinions, attitudes, moods and wishes.

Several of the examinations provided by members of ALTE at Level 2 are used as measures of language ability for official or institutional purposes, such as entry to courses of study and as part of degree courses.

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Speaking

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can buy goods in counter service shops, and order a meal in a restaurant, asking questions about the dishes on the menu and the services (such as use of credit cards) available. They can book a hotel room over the phone, and deal with most situations likely to arise while staying in a hotel. They can deal with a small number of routine situations in a bank, and ask questions about post office services. They can make a medical appointment over the phone, and give a simple explanation of a problem to a doctor, dentist or pharmacist. As tourists, they can get standard information from a Tourist Information office, and understand the main points of a guided tour, asking some simple questions for further information.

In the workplace, they can exchange opinions with colleagues as long as the topic is predictable, pass on messages and offer advice to clients within their own area of expertise.

If studying, they can ask simple questions, for example, for clarification, and take a limited part in a seminar or tutorial.

Writing

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can write short notes and messages and simple personal letters of a narrative or descriptive type, such as 'thank-you' letters and post cards.

In the workplace, they can write a short note of request and record a routine order. They can make notes during a meeting for their own purposes, and write a straightforward routine letter, although this will need to be checked by a colleague.

If studying, they can write down some information at a lecture, provided extra time is given for this. They can take notes from written sources, though these may well contain inaccuracies. They can write a simple narrative, but not an academic essay.

RECEPTIVE SKILLS

Reading

In social and travel contexts, 'Threshold' users can understand most of the language on an ordinary menu, routine letters and forms, adverts and brochures related to hotels or other forms of accommodation. They can understand most labels on everyday medical and food products, and follow simple instructions for use of medicines and cooking instructions found on food packaging.

As a general point, they can distinguish between personal and promotional mail from institutions such as banks, and get the general meaning of simple articles in newspapers or leaflets produced by post offices and banks.

In the workplace, they can read and act on standard letters which fall within their own work area. If given enough time, they can understand a report on a familiar topic. Instructions and product descriptions are also within the range of understanding at this level, provided that the language is simple and the subject matter predictable.

If studying, reading speed for longer texts is likely to be slow. They can understand a graphic presentation of a familiar topic, as long as not much text is involved. They can extract information from a textbook or article if it is presented in simplified form or if they are given plenty of time and they can make use of support materials such as dictionaries.

Listening

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can cope well enough to take part in a routine conversation on predictable topics to deal with most situations which might arise during a stay in a hotel. They can understand the general outline of a guided tour, the general meaning of a TV broadcast, and a simple phone message, but in each case the topic must be predictable and familiar.

In the workplace, users can take a routine order and deal with a predictable request from a visitor, for example, a request for a taxi to be called. They can take part in exchanges of opinions on familiar, predictable matters.

If studying, users at this level can understand some parts of a lecture and take a limited part in a seminar or tutorial, but only if allowances are made for the presence of non-native speakers. They can understand instructions on classes or assignments given by a teacher or lecturer.

ALTE LEVEL THREE – INDEPENDENT USER

Level Three may be referred to as an intermediate stage of proficiency. Users at this level are expected to be able to handle the main structures of the language with some confidence, demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and use appropriate communicative strategies in a variety of social situations. Their understanding of spoken language and written texts should go beyond being able to pick out items of factual information, and they should be able to distinguish between main and subsidiary points and between the general topic of a text and specific detail. They should be able to produce written texts of various types, showing the ability to develop an argument as well as describe or recount events. This level of ability allows the user a certain degree of independence when called upon to use the language in a variety of contexts. At this level the user has developed a greater flexibility and an ability to deal with the unexpected and to rely less on fixed patterns of language and short utterances. There is also a developing awareness of register and the conventions of politeness and degrees of formality as they are expressed through language.

Examinations at ALTE Level Three are frequently used as proof that the learner can do office work or take a non-academic course of study in the language being learned, e.g. in the country where the language is spoken. Learners at this level can be assumed to have sufficient expertise in the language for it to be of use in clerical, secretarial and managerial posts, and in some industries, in particular tourism.

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Speaking

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can deal with most situations that may arise in shops, restaurants, and hotels; for example, they can ask for a refund or for faulty goods to be replaced, and express pleasure or displeasure at the service given. Similarly, routine situations at the doctor's, in a bank or post office or at an airport or station can all be handled. In social conversation they can talk about a range of topics and express opinions to a limited extent. As tourists they can ask for further explanations about information given on a guided tour. They themselves can show visitors around, describe a place and answer questions about it.

In the workplace, users at this level can give detailed information and state detailed requirements within a familiar topic area, and can take some limited part in a meeting. They can take and pass on messages, although there may be difficulties if these are complex, and can carry out simple negotiations, for example on prices and conditions of delivery.

If studying, users at this level can ask questions during a lecture or presentation on a familiar or predictable topic, although this may be done with some difficulty. They can also give a short, simple presentation on a familiar topic. They can take part in a seminar or tutorial, again with some difficulty.

Writing

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can write most kinds of letters connected with accommodation, and can also write personal letters on a limited range of predictable topics.

In the workplace, users can produce a range of written documents but may need to have these checked by a native speaker if accuracy and register are important. They can produce texts which describe and give detailed information, e.g. about a product or service, as long as it is within a familiar area of work and they can write requests, also within a predictable range. They can take and pass on messages, but may have difficulty if these are lengthy or complex. They can take dictation if the pace is fairly slow, and there are opportunities for checking.

If studying, users at this level can make notes in lectures and seminars which are of some limited use for revision purposes, but may find this difficult unless extra time is given. They can also make notes from written sources, although key points may be missed, and they may not be sufficiently selective. They can write an essay which shows some ability to communicate, or an account of an experiment which demonstrates basic understanding of the work done.

RECEPTIVE SKILLS

Reading

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can read texts which are longer than the very brief signs, notices, etc. which are characteristic of what can be handled at the two lower levels. They can go beyond routine letters and the most basic newspaper and magazine articles, and have developed reading skills related to factual topics in which they have a special interest or to their own tastes in fiction. In everyday, practical situations, such as eating out, shopping and using services such as banks, they can read competently enough to deal with anything which does not involve some kind of specialised language (such as legal terms in a tenancy agreement).

In the workplace, they can deal with routine letters and understand the general meaning of a fair range of non-routine correspondence, although complex situations and the use of non-standard language would cause problems. They can handle short reports or articles on predictable topics, and grasp the general meaning of a report or article on a less familiar topic, but misunderstanding is likely where information is not clearly expressed. Instructions and product descriptions within the learner's own area of work can be understood, but only the general meaning of more theoretical material (e.g. technical reports) can be understood without access to support such as dictionaries, even when it is within the learner's area of expertise.

At this level, users are likely to have enough language ability to cope with some non-academic training courses which are conducted in the language being learnt. Users at this level can follow a lecture, presentation or demonstration on a familiar topic or where the context is well known, but are likely to have difficulty in following abstract argumentation. They can read simple textbooks and articles, but cannot read quickly enough to cope with an academic course.

Listening

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can cope with casual conversation on a fairly wide range of familiar, predictable topics, such as personal experiences, work and current events. They can understand routine medical advice. They can understand most of a TV programme because of the visual support provided, and grasp the main points of a radio programme. On a guided tour they have the understanding required in order to ask and answer questions.

In the workplace, they can follow presentations or demonstrations of a factual nature if they relate to a visible, physical object such as a product.

If studying, they can understand the general meaning of a lecture, as long as the topic is predictable.

ALTE LEVEL FOUR - COMPETENT USER

At this level, users are expected to be able to use the structures of a language with ease and fluency. They are aware of the relationship between the language and the culture it exists in, and of the significance of register. This means that to some extent they are able to adapt their language use to a variety of social situations, and express opinions and take part in discussions and arguments in a culturally acceptable way. Users at this level can develop their own interests in reading both factual and fictional texts. They can also produce a variety of types of texts and utterances, such as letters of varying degrees of formality. They can use language in a creative and flexible way, with the ability to respond appropriately to unforeseen as well as predictable situations, producing quite long and complex utterances.

The written and spoken texts encountered in most common everyday situations can be dealt with at a level below that reached by the Level Four User, but some of the more difficult situations connected with renting accommodation demand this level of language. Users at this level can enjoy a wide range of social contacts.

Examinations at Level Four may be used as proof of the level of language necessary to work at a managerial or professional level or follow a course of academic study at university level.

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Speaking

In social and travel contexts, users at this level are beyond the stage of having any problems in dealing with many of the routine situations of everyday life, such as those which arise in shops, restaurants, banks and hotels. They can take part in lengthy casual conversations, and discuss abstract or cultural topics fluently and with a good range of expression. Nuances of meaning and opinion are not beyond their grasp, but there may be difficulties when talking about sensitive or complex issues. With this degree of competence, they can handle the requirements of entertaining socially, or of being entertained as a guest. Users at this level are able to participate quite actively in and enjoy a foreign culture.

In the workplace, they can argue a point persuasively, and ask questions which go outside their own immediate area of responsibility or expertise. They can contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within their own area of work, and give a presentation or demonstration. Users at this level can use the telephone for most business purposes.

If studying, users at this level can give a clear presentation on a familiar topic, but may have difficulty developing or explaining complex points, or answering unpredictable questions. In a seminar or tutorial, they can present and, to some extent, justify their opinions, but may not be able to handle probing or hostile questioning.

Writing

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can write personal letters, only encountering difficulties where very complex issues arise, and they can produce some of the more formal types of letters, such as a letter to a newspaper.

In the workplace, they can deal with routine requests for goods and services, but may need help to deal with a situation which demands tact or delicacy. They can take dictation and make notes, provided that very complex, delicate or abstract matters are not being dealt with. They can write letters of many familiar types, such as enquiry, complaint, request and application.

If studying, users at this level can take notes in a lecture or seminar which will be useful for later writing or revision. They can make notes from written sources and write an essay, although errors of grammar and vocabulary, as well as style, may occur. Similarly, an account of an experiment may be written fairly adequately, but occasional errors may occur, and conclusions may not be adequately supported.

RECEPTIVE SKILLS

Reading

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can understand magazine and newspaper articles, although complex plots, arguments and humour may present difficulties.

In the workplace, they can understand instructions, articles and reports, as long as, in most of these cases, the topic area is within the learner's own field, and no particularly complex concepts and arguments or unusual vocabulary are involved.

If studying, reading related to the user's own subject area presents problems only when abstract or metaphorical language and cultural allusions are frequent. However, the user still has difficulty getting through the amount of reading required on an academic course, and may not be able to cope with postgraduate study.

Listening

In social and travel contexts, Level Four users can cope with everyday life up to the level of being able to understand details of accommodation arrangements such as tenancy agreements. They have sufficient competence in comprehension to cope with being entertained or entertaining socially, and taking part in a variety of casual conversations. They can understand a great deal of what is available on TV and radio and in plays and films, but complex plots and detailed arguments will escape them.

In the workplace thay can understand most of what takes place in meetings and seminars within their own area of work. They can follow arguments unless they are very complex or abstract.

If studying, users at this level can follow much of what is said in a lecture, demonstration or presentation, seminar or tutorial, although unfamiliar accents, cultural allusions and jokes, unfamiliar or complex subject matter and colloquial language may cause difficulties.

ALTE LEVEL FIVE – GOOD USER

At this level, the learner is approaching the linguistic competence of an educated native speaker, and is able to use the language in a range of culturally appropriate ways. Users at this level are able to improve their use of the language by extending their vocabulary and refining their usage and command of style and register rather than by learning about new areas of grammar. Their level of competence gives them access to the press and other media, and to areas of the culture such as drama, film and literature.

Success in examinations at this level may be seen as proof that the learner is able to cope with high level academic work. Such examinations frequently have some cultural or academic content, often in the form of an optional component.

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Speaking

In social and travel contexts, a Level Five user can cope with ease with the language use situations of everyday life, including conversations on a variety of topics and in a variety of contexts. Lapses in understanding or appropriacy of language use which occur are likely to be minor, and users at this level have the strategies for repairing misunderstandings. They can also handle phone conversations with people they know on a variety of topics.

In the workplace, they can argue a case effectively, justifying demands and specifying needs clearly. They can handle a wide range of non-routine as well as routine situations arising out of dealings with colleagues and outside contacts. In meetings they can participate fully in discussions and arguments. If unknown terms are used, they can check them or compensate for lack of knowledge in the same way a native speaker would.

If studying, users at this level can give a presentation or demonstration, handling questions or criticisms appropriately, although a complex, theoretical matter may prove difficult to explain. They can take an active part in seminars and tutorials, arguing and expressing disagreement without giving offence.

Writing

In the social and travel context, all normal uses of writing are available at a level below this.

In the workplace, learners at this level can handle a wide range of non-routine as well as routine situations arising out of dealings with colleagues and outside contacts. They can take dictation on all matters likely to arise in their area of expertise, but may need to use a dictionary to check spellings, just as a native speaker would. In meetings, they can make full and accurate notes while continuing to follow discussions and arguments and participate in them. Correspondence, even of a specialist type, can be understood at this level, and the learner can write any type of letter demanded by the area of work. They can write reports without taking much longer than a native speaker, and without the risk of more than occasional minor errors, and can write a set

of instructions with little risk of error, even when complex or sensitive issues are involved.

If studying, users at this level can make useful notes from text, and write essays with only the occasional error in grammar or vocabulary. They can write accounts of experiments with sensitivity to the conventions of presentation and style.

RECEPTIVE SKILLS

Reading

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can cope with all areas of the media with little risk of misunderstanding.

In the workplace, they can deal with correspondence, even where specialist areas of knowledge are involved. Reports and articles are also fully accessible, with the possibility of difficulties only where very complex or technical points are being made.

If studying, they can use written sources of information effectively. In dealing with texts, reading speed is still slow for a postgraduate level of study, and culturally remote references in the material may interfere with understanding. Sources of information can be accessed, the usefulness of materials assessed and dictionaries used effectively.

Listening

In social and travel contexts, users at this level can cope with most of what is available in the media.

In the workplace, such learners can follow presentations, demonstrations, with difficulties only where complex theoretical information, of a kind which might also present difficulties to a native speaker, is given.

If studying, they can cope with lectures, presentations and demonstrations, although jokes and allusions and unfamiliar accents could cause difficulties.

3. RECOGNITION AND USE

Many of the tests described in this book have very wide currency, and are taken by large numbers of candidates worldwide. First Certificate in English, for example, had over 250,000 candidates during 1996, while the Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache was taken that year by more than 35,000 candidates (at the Goethe-Institut and Deutscher-Volkshochschul Verband), and the Diploma Básico de Español by over 8,000. These tests, and many of the others described here, are used as proof of ability for a range of purposes related to language learning, work, study and personal interest.

Institutions which use the tests in this way set their entrance requirements according to the type and level of work or study for which they are selecting applicants, so that low as well as high level tests may be appropriate for this role. For example, the Preliminary English Test, at ALTE Level Two, is used in Italy as a requirement for students of engineering.

The lists that follow show which tests are used as proof of ability to use a language in the workplace, and which are used as qualifications for entry to various educational establishments.

The following examinations are recognised as proof of language ability to function in the workplace:

Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache
Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung
Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung
Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom
First Certificate in English
Certificate in Advanced English
Certificate of Proficiency in English
Certificado Inicial de Español
Diploma Básico de Español
Diploma Superior de Español
Diplôme de Langue Française
Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes
Erschten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch
Zweeten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch
Iewerschten Diplom Letzebuergesch
Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I
Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II
Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal, Niveau Basiskennis
Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal, Niveau Uitgebreide Kennis
Certificado de Língua Portuguesa
Språkprøven i norsk for fremmedspråklige voksne
Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Elemental
Yleiset kielitutkinnot

The following examinations are recognised as entry requirements to educational establishments or as language requirements as part of specific courses of study:

Danskprøve 2
Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache
Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung
Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung
Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom
Preliminary English Test
First Certificate in English
Certificate in Advanced English
Certificate of Proficiency in English
Certificado Inicial de Español
Diploma Básico de Español
Diploma Superior de Español
Diplôme de Langue Française
Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes
Diplôme de Hautes Etudes Françaises
Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I
Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II
Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal, Niveau Basiskennis
Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal, Niveau Uitgebreide Kennis
Diploma de Língua Portuguesa
Test i norsk for fremmedspråklige – høyere nivå
Rikstestet
Test in Swedish for University Studies
Yleiset kielitutkinnot

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4. THE ALTE CODE OF PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

In 1994 the members of ALTE decided that it was essential to adopt a formal Code of Practice which would both define the standards that current and future members would agree to aim to meet in producing their examinations and serve as a statement to consumers of those examinations of what they should expect.

The Code of Practice was devised with the principal objectives as stated in the Introduction to this document very much in mind; in order to establish common levels of proficiency, tests must be comparable in terms of quality as well as level, and common standards need, therefore, to be applied in their production. The Code of Practice sets out these standards and states the responsibilities of both producers and users of language examinations.

THE ALTE CODE OF PRACTICE

As providers of language examinations, the members of ALTE wish to adopt a Code of Practice in order to make explicit the standards they aim to meet, and to acknowledge the obligations under which they operate.

In formulating and adhering to a Code of Practice, it is necessary to distinguish between the various roles of those who have an interest in the issue of setting and maintaining standards in language examinations. These are: examination developers, examination users and examination takers.

Examination developers are people who actually construct and administer examinations as well as those who set policies for particular testing programmes.

Examination users may select examinations, commission examination development services or make decisions which affect the educational possibilities and careers of others on the basis of examination results.

Examination takers, or candidates, are those who, either by choice or because they are required to do so by examination users, take examinations.

The roles of examination developers and users may of course overlap, as when a state education agency commissions examination development services, sets policies that control the development process, and makes decisions on the basis of the results. Members of ALTE are primarily concerned with the development and administration of examinations. As such, they have a duty towards examination users and ultimately to examination takers. The decisions made by examination users have a direct effect on examination takers or candidates; for that reason, the obligations of examination users are also dealt with in this Code of Practice.

Members of ALTE undertake to safeguard the rights of examination takers by striving to meet the standards of a Code of Practice in four areas:

- Developing Examinations;
- Interpreting Examination Results;
- Striving for Fairness;
- Informing Examination Takers.

The Code of Practice is divided into two parts. Part One focuses on the responsibilities of ALTE members and Part Two on the responsibilities of examination users.

PART ONE – RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALTE MEMBERS

DEVELOPING EXAMINATIONS

Members of ALTE undertake to provide the information that examination users and takers need in order to select appropriate examinations.

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following, for the examinations described in this book:

1. Define what each examination assesses and what it should be used for. Describe the population(s) for which it is appropriate.
2. Explain relevant measurement concepts as necessary for clarity at the level of detail that is appropriate for the intended audience(s).
3. Describe the process of examination development.
4. Explain how the content and skills to be tested are selected.
5. Provide either representative samples or complete copies of examination tasks, instructions, answer sheets, manuals and reports of results to users.
6. Describe the procedures used to ensure the appropriateness of each examination for the groups of different racial, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds who are likely to be tested.
7. Identify and publish the conditions and skills needed to administer each examination.

INTERPRETING EXAMINATION RESULTS

Members of ALTE undertake to help examination users and takers interpret results correctly.

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following:

8. Provide prompt and easily understood reports of examination results that describe candidate performance clearly and accurately.

9. Describe the procedures used to establish pass marks and/or grades.

10. If no pass mark is set, then provide information that will help users follow reasonable procedures for setting pass marks when it is appropriate to do so.

11. Warn users to avoid specific, reasonably anticipated misuses of examination results.

STRIVING FOR FAIRNESS

Members of ALTE undertake to make their examinations as fair as possible for candidates of different backgrounds (e.g. race, gender, ethnic origin, handicapping conditions, etc.).

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following:

12. Review and revise examination tasks and related materials to avoid potentially insensitive content or language.

13. Enact procedures that help to ensure that differences in performance are related primarily to the skills under assessment rather than to irrelevant factors such as race, gender and ethnic origin.

14. When feasible, make appropriately modified forms of examinations or administration procedures available for candidates with handicapping conditions.

INFORMING EXAMINATION TAKERS

Members of ALTE undertake to provide examination users and takers with the information described below.

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following:

15. Provide examination users and takers with information to help them judge whether a particular examination should be taken, or if an available examination at a higher or lower level should be used.

16. Provide candidates with the information they need in order to be familiar with the coverage of the examination, the types of task formats, the rubrics and other instructions and appropriate examination-taking strategies. Strive to make such information equally available to all candidates.

17. Provide information about the rights which candidates may or may not have to obtain copies of papers and completed answer sheets, to retake papers, have papers re-marked or results checked.

18. Provide information about how long results will be kept on file and indicate to whom and under what circumstances examination results will or will not be released.

PART TWO – RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXAMINATION USERS

Examination users are in a position to get information about examinations from examination developers, and a Code of Practice for them concerns the appropriate use of this information. Like examination developers, they have a duty towards candidates, and are under an obligation to set and maintain high standards of fair behaviour. These responsibilities are described below under the following four headings: Selecting Appropriate Examinations, Interpreting Examination Results, Striving for Fairness, Informing Examination Takers.

- **Selecting Appropriate Examinations**

Examination users should select examinations that meet the purpose for which they are to be used and that are appropriate for the intended candidate populations.

- **Interpreting Examination Results**

Examination users should interpret scores correctly.

- **Striving for Fairness**

Examination users should select examinations that have been developed in ways that attempt to make them as fair as possible for candidates of different backgrounds (e.g. race, gender, ethnic origin, handicapping conditions, etc.).

- **Informing Examination Takers**

In cases where the examination user has direct communication with candidates, they should regard themselves as having many of the obligations set out for members of ALTE under the section in Part One entitled Informing Examination Takers.

Acknowledgement is made to The Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education produced by the Washington D. C. Joint Committee on Testing Practices.

5. OTHER ALTE PROJECTS

Besides establishing the ALTE Framework, ALTE members have also worked on a number of other projects which relate to the three principal objectives mentioned on page 1. The projects, several of which received funding from the European Commission under the Lingua Project, are listed below with a brief explanation.

THE CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLISTS PROJECT

This Project relates to the description of test content, and the development of an instrument to allow for a systematic comparison of examination materials across various languages. The instrument has been designed to offer two levels of description:

i. a brief checklist which permits rapid assessment of the salient features of a test;

ii. a more detailed checklist which allows for the specific description of materials within components of a test battery or for test tasks used for various purposes.

THE ITEM-WRITER GUIDELINES PROJECT

This project set out to produce a guide for materials writers who are employed in the production of test materials. These guidelines have been translated into many of the ALTE languages and can be used as the basis of a taught course or can be adapted as self-access materials. The areas covered include: Models of Language Ability; The Test Production Process; Item Types; and Issues in Marking and Scoring.

COMPETENCY-BASED PROFICIENCY SCALES

This project concerns the development of competency-based proficiency scales – or 'can-do' statements – which have been written and grouped at the five levels in the ALTE Framework. These 'can-do' statements, as the term suggests, are a series of statements which define what a language learner can reasonably be expected to do in typical situations (to carry out particular activities in specific environments) at the different levels of competence. They cover the range from Post-beginner (Level 1) to Advanced (Level 5) and have been grouped according to three contextual categories of language use (which broadly speaking relate to the domains of the *Common European Framework*, which is described below):

- Social and Tourist (public and personal domains)
- The Workplace (the occupational domain)
- Study (the educational domain)

Each of these categories is sub-divided into areas of concern which relate to situated language use with reference to the necessary skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing). The project is an attempt to address the important question of communication between the stakeholders in the testing process (test takers, teachers, employers etc.), and focuses in particular on the interpretation of test results by non-specialists.

A MULTILINGUAL GLOSSARY OF ASSESSMENT AND LANGUAGE TESTING TERMS

It became clear that, with members from all parts of Europe discussing aspects of language testing together, it was vital to have a shared terminology related to assessment and language testing in all the languages used. In conducting the business of ALTE, it has been necessary to ensure that technical and semi-technical terms are used with precision, and that terms in different languages which appear to mean the same as one another in fact do so. The idea of producing a multilingual glossary of assessment and language testing terms has thus grown out of the needs experienced by members of ALTE. Such a glossary will be useful for checking the meaning of technical terms in one's own language as well as for finding the equivalent term in another language. Aimed at practitioners, the Glossary contains terms accompanied by short definitions and guidance on where further information can be found; all terms are cross-referenced in the languages of the project partners. The Glossary in its published form is a volume in the *Studies in Language Testing* series (CUP/UCLES).

A sub-set of terms from this Glossary is included as an Appendix to this document.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE: A COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

The Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching* project was one of the main components in Phase 2 of the more extensive project, *Language Learning for European Citizenship* (1989–1996).

ALTE members were involved in various stages of the development work of the *Common European Framework* and in particular ALTE was commissioned by the Council of Europe to prepare a supplementary document intended for people involved in language test development. This document is entitled a *User's Guide for Examiners*. The work to produce this *User's Guide* was able to draw extensively on work completed for The Item-writer Guidelines Project (described on this page).

Certain aspects of the Common Framework have already had an influence on the way ALTE members describe their examinations. In particular this relates to the specification of *domains* and *communicative activities*. In this conception of communication, the language user's communicative competence is activated through various language activities which are themselves contextualised within domains. These domains are broadly classified as fourfold: personal, public, occupational and

educational, and the communicative activities are sub-divided into those which are productive, receptive, interactive and mediating.

- **Production** includes speaking activities as diverse as addressing audiences and singing, while examples of written production include creative writing as well as filling in forms and questionnaires.

- **Receptive** activities concern listening and reading, including specific purposes for these activities, listening or reading for gist, for specific information, for detailed understanding, etc.

- **Interactive** activities may be spoken or written. For speaking, these range from formal discussion, debate and interviews to informal conversations and verbal exchanges. For writing they include the exchange of correspondence by memos, faxes, letters and e-mail.

- **Mediating** activities include translation, interpretation, summarizing and paraphrasing in order to facilitate communication between others.

This work is consistent with the ALTE projects to develop competency-based proficiency scales and ALTE's attempts to describe examinations in terms of what language users at each level can do. This is reflected in the descriptions given above on pages 2–8.

6. EXAMINATIONS AND EXAMINATION SYSTEMS

This section gives details of the general language examinations produced by all members of ALTE. It is organised in the following way.

Information is given according to language, and these are named in their own language rather than in English, and arranged in alphabetical order. A brief introduction to the member organisation is given, with contact details for further information. This is followed by an outline of the examination system, the processes by which the tests are written, administered and marked. After that, each test is described separately, with details of components and item types presented according to a standard, skill-based format. These descriptions begin with the lowest level test, and end with the highest.

Member organisations produce tests other than those described here, and most have a variety of other functions; the tests included in this document are limited to general tests devised for adult learners of the language in question, at the five ALTE levels.

CATALÀ
Generalitat de Catalunya, Direcció General de Política Lingüística (DGPL)

The Direcció General de Política Lingüística (DGPL) is the General Directorate of Linguistic Policy in the autonomous government of Catalonia. It was created by the first democratically elected government of the Generalitat de Catalunya in 1980, as part of the Ministry of Culture. Its aims are to give impetus to the development of linguistic legislation and to monitor the implementation of linguistic policy. Within the Directorate there is a Linguistic Advisory Department which is responsible for organizing Catalan courses for adults and teacher training courses. This department also sets and administers the examinations leading to the Certificates of the Junta Permanent de Català (Permanent Board for Catalan) and the Certificat Internacional de Català.

The Certificates of the Permanent Board for Catalan are specifically directed at adult citizens who were unable to study Catalan during their school days, as it was not a curriculum subject during General Franco's regime. These examinations are designed to test candidates' command of language use both in everyday situations and in aspects of specialised language use. For this reason two kinds of examinations are offered: there are examinations at four levels of general attainment and three examinations in Catalan for specific purposes.

At present, the examinations of the Certificat Internacional de Català are aimed at learners of Catalan as a Foreign Language at two levels of general attainment. At a later date, the aim is to offer three different levels of general attainment as well as certificates in Catalan for specific purposes.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Nivell Bàsic (NB)
Nivell Llindar (NL)

Both examinations are usually held in May at centres in Europe and America. Candidates register by applying between the end of February and the end of March to the institution responsible in their own country for the organisation of the exams, who ensure correct completion of entries and send them back to the DGPL. These institutions are responsible for sending out information to interested people. Results are sent at the beginning of July to these institutions and to each candidate. Diplomas are sent direct by the DGPL in September.

Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Cultura
Direcció General de Política Lingüística

For further information regarding the examinations of the Certificat Internacional de Català, please write to the address below:

Direcció General de Política Lingüística
Servei d'Assessorament Lingüístic
C/ de Mallorca, 272, 8a planta
Barcelona
Catalonia
SPAIN

Tel: +34-3-4825600
Fax: +34-3-2160455

EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Examination items are set by two teams: one of item writers for the Nivell Bàsic (NB) and the other for the Nivell Llindar (NL). Each team is co-ordinated by a team leader. The other team members are external consultants, who have experience either of teaching Catalan abroad or of setting examinations. Each team member selects material from a range of different sources, which include newspapers and magazines, letters, brochures, advertisements and radio items. Choice of materials is guided by the following criteria:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- range of application;
- item types;
- number of items in the section;
- cultural considerations.

1.2 Test item writing

Items are written by individual team members and then subjected to rigorous vetting and editing by the whole team and the team leader. An Examinations Officer supervises the process of item writing and test construction. Guidance is given to each member of the item writing team.

The quality of tests is ensured by a committee made up of experts from institutions associated with the teaching of Catalan as a Foreign Language. Together with the team co-ordinators, they meet twice during the setting of the examinations to check the suggested items and assess their suitability.

1.3 Pretesting

Owing to the limited number of candidates, no formal pretesting of materials takes place at present, but feedback is obtained and the suitability of items checked by a committee, as described above.

MARKING

2.1 Process

For the NL the writing component is marked, according to criteria and scores provided, by teachers of Catalan who are trained as Assessors. The section which tests grammar and vocabulary is marked by the same teachers using a mark scheme. Marks are recorded on mark sheets.

For the speaking component of the NB and NL, each candidate is interviewed individually by two Examiners, one of whom may be the candidate's teacher. The other Examiner is always a teacher who has had no previous contact with the candidate. This second teacher takes the role of Assessor; the first, the role of the Interlocutor.

The listening and reading components in both examinations and the grammar component of the NL are marked at a computer centre.

2.2 Training

Once a year a training session for Markers and Oral Examiners is held in Barcelona under the direction of the Examinations Officer. These sessions aim to ensure a uniform standard of marking and assessment for the writing and speaking components of the examinations.

For the writing component sample examination scripts are used and for the speaking component mock interviews with students are recorded on video.

During the training sessions, the scale descriptors and marking scales are presented and defined. Some marked samples of oral interviews and scripts are studied, and other samples are then used for Examiners to make their own assessments. Their marks are discussed and compared with those given by the Examinations Officer.

2.3 Checking

Examinations Officers from the DGPL check random samples of scripts marked by local Assessors to check their performance. If the criteria assessment has not been correctly applied, then all the scripts of that Assessor are checked and the marks adjusted. There are plans to introduce a double marking method: the first mark will be given, as at present, by a practising teacher and the second by a member of a trained team at the DGPL.

Results

There are two grades for Nivell Bàsic: Fail – less than 60% – and Pass. For Nivell Llindar there are five grades, ranging from Fail – less than 60% – to Excellent – 90% or more. Lists of results, in the form of grades, are sent to the examining centres at the beginning of July (the examinations being held in May). Candidates are also informed of the grade achieved (but not the actual mark) by individual letter and through lists put up at the centres. In mid-September diplomas are sent out, which show the grade obtained.

Security

Every stage of the examination procedure, from test construction to administration, is controlled to ensure maximum security. All examinations are printed by the DGPL. Listening tests are recorded professionally at a studio, under the supervision of an Examinations Officer. A strict standard of security is imposed on the studio.

Each examination centre is required to follow strict procedures concerning the receipt of materials, administration and return of tests.

CERTIFICAT INTERNACIONAL DE CATALÀ – NIVELL BÀSIC (NB)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Waystage specification. It tests the ability to communicate at an elementary level in the most frequent and basic situations of everyday life in a Catalan-speaking environment.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to identify the main points of short factual texts and to scan for information in order to perform relevant tasks. Texts can be public notices, advertisements, short news articles, etc.

There are four questions with twenty items of the following task types: multiple-choice (3 and 4 options), true/false, yes/no and matching.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand short oral texts to detect the gist, or relevant specific information. Listening texts include informal recorded exchanges, announcements and news items.

There are twenty items of the following task types: matching (text and pictures), true/false and short answers (a number, two or three words).

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. They are expected to operate in everyday situations such as asking for information, making arrangements, thanking someone, etc. They must also participate in simple conversations on everyday topics related to their personal experience. The Examiners determine only whether or not candidates are capable of expressing themselves in a comprehensible way.

Candidates must first respond to six questions of a general conversational nature. This is followed by a number of tasks based on everyday situations. The tasks are guided and include a clear description of the context.

COMMUNICATIVE AWARENESS

Candidates are expected to identify the appropriate response to everyday utterances or situations.

There are fifteen taped utterances or descriptions of situations. For each of these there is a written multiple-choice item. Candidates must choose the appropriate response.

Weighting of components

The Speaking component carries 30% of the total marks, Listening 30%, Reading 25% and Communicative Awareness 15%.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

CERTIFICAT INTERNACIONAL DE CATALÀ NIVELL ELEMENTAL (NE)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification. It tests the ability to communicate satisfactorily in most situations of everyday life in a Catalan-speaking environment.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to understand authentic, factual texts which are mainly based on topics of general interest. They must be able to understand the gist as well as specific details and scan for information. They are also expected to read texts in order to appreciate the themes and opinions of the writer. Texts are taken mainly from brochures, newspapers and magazines.

There are usually three texts with a total length of approximately 1,200 words. There are twenty items of the following task types: true/false (yes/no), multiple-choice and matching.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write personal letters in order to give or ask for information, report events, describe situations, express opinions, make plans, proposals, etc.

There is one written task. It requires the candidate to write a personal letter. There are five guiding points which provide the basis of the letter. The task includes a clear description of the purpose and the audience. The response should be between 120 and 150 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand texts produced in everyday situations (dialogues, loudspeaker announcements, telephone answering machine messages, etc.) and texts taken from the mass media (advertisements, news, traffic news, announcements of general interest, etc.). They are expected to understand both the overall content and relevant details.

There are two sections. The first consists of a text lasting about four minutes with fifteen written items. The task type is true/false. The second section has five short recorded texts. For each of these there is a written multiple-choice item.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. They are expected to operate in everyday situations (e.g. formulate questions and requests, apologise, etc.). They are also expected to participate in conversations on everyday topics. Candidates must be able to express themselves in a way which is sufficiently accurate and appropriate to be comprehensible.

There are two sections. In the first section candidates must respond to nine questions which test the ability to describe, narrate and express opinions. The second section involves completing five tasks based on everyday situations. The tasks are guided and include a clear description of the context.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and control of the language system and of the vocabulary required at this level, by completing three types of tasks.

There are two sections. The first consists of ten sentence transformation items and fifteen gap-filling items related to grammatical aspects. The second section consists of twenty gap-filling items, related to vocabulary.

Weighting of components

The Reading, Listening and Speaking components each carry 25% of the total marks and Writing and Structural Competence 12.5% each.

Results

There are four pass grades: Excellent, Good, Satisfactory and Pass. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

DANSK
Danish Language Testing Consortium (DLTC)

The Danish Language Testing Consortium was formed early in 1993, and brings together four organisations: Institut for Nordisk Filologi, Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Undervisningsministeriet (Folkeoplysningsafdelingen) and Studieskolerne in Denmark.

The Institut for Nordisk Filologi is the Department of Nordic Philology of the University of Copenhagen, and is a major centre for the study of Scandinavian languages.

Dansk Flygtningehjælp is the Danish Refugee Council, a private humanitarian organisation, which provides the Danish state with an eighteen-month integration and language programme for refugees. As part of the language programme, the Refugee Council has developed its Test 1 and Test 2 in collaboration with the Danish regional authorities.

Studieskolerne are a chain of language schools which are affiliated to the Universities of Odense, Århus and Copenhagen. Studieskolerne produce the Danish language tests Danskprøve 1, 2 and 3. Danskprøve 2 is produced in collaboration with the Danish Refugee Council.

The Ministry of Education's Adult Education Division has an Examinations Unit for tests related to formal Adult Education. Among other things it is possible to take a qualifying test in Danish as a Second Language. This test in Danish is equivalent to the test in the 9th grade of the Danish primary and lower secondary school.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Test 1
Test 2
Danskprøve 2

The examinations can be taken twice a year. The Danish Refugee Council's Test 1 and Test 2 can be taken either at the Refugee Council's language schools, or at approximately forty-five other schools throughout Denmark.

For further information about the availability of these examinations and about registration procedures and dates, please write to the addresses below:

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Peter Villads Vedel
Ministry of Education
Adult Education Division
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Birger Mortensen
Danish Refugee Council
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Studieskolen i København
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EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

The examinations of the Danish Language Testing Consortium are all set according to the same procedure. Two test writers produce proposals, which are subsequently approved by the councils for the examinations. These councils include representatives from the schools and institutions which use and recognise the examinations. There are also examination committees, which have the task of selecting texts from a wide range of sources, including books, newspapers and magazines. Texts may be edited and modified to some extent. Choice of materials is guided by the following criteria:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- main item or task.

1.2 Test item writing

Item writers are either practising teachers or consultants. They are appointed by the councils for the examinations to produce test proposals, which are discussed and approved by the councils. The councils for the examinations meet prior to the administration of each examination.

1.3 Pretesting

Owing to the nature of the examinations and the limited number of candidates, no formal pretesting takes place.

MARKING

2.1 Process

Test 1 and Test 2 are marked by a local and/or an external Examiner. Danskprøve 2 is marked by two external Examiners, who are appointed by the council for the examination. For the oral component, each candidate is interviewed individually by two Examiners, one of whom may be the candidate's teacher.

2.2 Training

Once a year an in-service training session for Assessors and Oral Examiners is organised by the councils for the examinations. These seminars are held in order to ensure a uniform standard of marking and assessment. Assessments are discussed and evaluated on the basis of selected scripts.

2.3 Checking

No formalised checking of Assessors is undertaken. Each candidate is informed of complaints procedures and has easy access to the system by which complaints can be filed.

Results

Results, which are given either in the form of Pass or Fail or as a mark on a scale, are issued a maximum of three weeks after the examination. The results of the oral component are given immediately after the examination.

Security

Every stage of the examination procedure, from test construction to administration, is carefully controlled to ensure maximum security. No test is ever re-used.

TEST 1

This examination tests the ability to communicate at an elementary level in the most frequently encountered and basic everyday situations. It is used for assessment at the end of the Basic or Level 1 course run by the Danish Refugee Council, the aim of which is to enable students to cope with communication in Danish in a number of ordinary, everyday situations.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read a simple, narrative text on a topic of general interest. Texts are written specially for the examinations, and are approximately 350–400 words in length.

There is one text with twelve items of the following task type: open-ended questions of increasing difficulty.

WRITING

Candidates have to write a short composition on a topic of general interest.

There is one compulsory task. The composition should be between 75 and 100 words in length, and the time allowed for writing it is forty-five minutes.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand a short, semi-authentic taped dialogue, which is based on an everyday situation. They must also be able to write down a dictated text.

The dialogue is about 300 words in length, with twenty-four multiple-choice items. The dictation is between fifty and seventy-five words in length, and is read twice at normal reading speed.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners, and are expected to be able to take an active part in a conversation on a topic of general, everyday interest. Candidates should be able to understand and respond to simple questions on everyday topics, and to use a number of basic language structures.

There are two tasks. One involves the candidate leading a conversation and the other involves responding to a conversation led by the Examiner.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted at 25% of the total marks.

Results

Each component of the examination must be passed separately. Two different methods of grading are used: either a grade of Pass or Fail is given, or a mark on a scale from one to thirteen, where the pass mark is six. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates who have also completed the Level 1 course of tuition.

TEST 2

This is an examination at an intermediate level, which tests the ability to communicate satisfactorily in Danish in a variety of everyday situations. It follows the Level 2 course of tuition run by the Danish Refugee Council, which aims to consolidate and extend the language skills already acquired at Level 1.

There are four components:

READING

There is a test of reading comprehension and a test of reading proficiency. The test of comprehension is based on a modified version of an authentic text such as a newspaper article. The proficiency test is based on a modified newspaper article on a general, non-literary topic such as the Danish education system, the labour market or some aspect of the social system, culture or leisure.

The reading comprehension test lasts thirty minutes, and consists of approximately twelve items of the following task types: true/false (yes/no), short answers, open-ended questions. Reading proficiency is tested by one task: candidates are given twenty minutes in which to read the text, and five minutes to make a verbal summary of it.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write a composition on a topic of general interest.

A choice of two tasks is given from which candidates must select one. Responses should be between 150 and 250 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand a short text such as a narrative, which is read aloud at normal reading speed.

The test lasts approximately twelve minutes and there is a single text, which is read twice. There are thirteen true/false items.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners and are expected to answer questions and take part in a conversation based on topics of general interest, such as education, work, the social system, culture and leisure in Denmark. They must be able to display comprehension, the ability to formulate replies and a range of other communicative skills.

The tasks consist of summarizing the content of a text, describing what happens in a text, participating in a conversation and answering questions about an unseen text and a topic of general interest.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted at 25% of the total marks.

Results

Each component of the examination must be passed separately. Two different methods of grading are used: either a grade of Pass or Fail is given, or a mark on a scale from one to thirteen, where the pass mark is six. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

DANSKPROVE 2

This is an examination at an advanced level, which is recognised as an entrance requirement by Danish universities. The examination was developed in co-operation with the University of Copenhagen.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates must be able to read authentic fictional or non-fictional texts. They are expected to understand the gist as well as specific details, and to demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary, phrasal expressions and idioms. They must be able to express their own opinions of the text and argue in defence of them. Texts are taken mainly from newspapers and magazines.

There is a single text, which is two or three pages long. There is one task, which is to present a short oral summary of the text. Candidates are given thirty minutes to do this.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to produce a written text on a general topic which demonstrates competence in a wide range of language use, including an extensive vocabulary and variety and complexity of sentence structures. All basic grammatical and syntactic structures must be accurately used.

There are three tasks from which candidates must select one. Two of the tasks are compositions on general topics and one involves responding to a text in which opinions are expressed. Responses should be approximately 400 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand a narrative text of general or current interest. They should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the structure of the text, and an ability to pick out main points, points of view and ideas and reproduce them in a fully comprehensible shortened version.

There is one task, which involves extracting information from a text which is read aloud and writing a résumé of it.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by a local Examiner and an external Assessor. They are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and control of the language system, and at this level there should be no major errors in usage and vocabulary. All basic grammatical and syntactic structures should be accurately used. Candidates should be able to assimilate and pass on new information rapidly.

The first task consists of reading an unseen text on a topic which deals with some aspects and problems of contemporary life, and presenting a short oral summary of the text. Candidates have thirty

minutes in which to do this. They then have to participate actively in a conversation on the topic, and express their personal opinions about it.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted at 25% of the total marks.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Each component of the examination must be passed individually. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

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DEUTSCH
Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV)

The Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV) is a non-profit-making adult education association catering for more than 1,000 adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) in Germany. Nearly 4,000 full-time academic staff and more than 180,000 freelance teachers are employed in Volkshochschulen. Throughout Germany more than six million people attend classes and seminars. More than 14 million hours of teaching are organised. Out of these, language classes account for 38.5%, which equals 5.5 million teaching hours.

More than twenty-five years ago the DVV set up a language examinations system to improve the quality of language teaching in Volkshochschulen. Among other language examinations there is the Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache, which is jointly organised by the DVV and the Goethe-Institut. Following the establishment of an examination system, the DVV set up an Examinations Office in Frankfurt where the examinations are centrally developed, evaluated and administered and where examination certificates are issued. From 1998 onwards the Examinations Office is organised in the form of a limited company. The major shareholder is the DVV.

The examination presented here is:

Grundbaustein Deutsch (GBS DaF)

The Grundbaustein Deutsch is a step leading towards the *Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache*.

The *Grundbaustein Deutsch* examination can be taken at all Volkshochschulen in Germany, and at all language centres in other European adult education associations which are members of the International Certificate Conference (ICC).

For further information about the availability of the Grundbaustein Deutsch als Fremdsprache in Europe and in countries ouside Europe, please contact:

Managing Director
Hans-Dieter Teichmann

or:

The Language Co-ordinator
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Internet: http://www.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/die/pz

DVVvhs

Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Item writers are commissioned for both the Grundbaustein (GBS) Deutsch and the Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF) examinations, the latter two in co-operation with the Goethe-Institut, to select the materials from a wide range of sources, such as newspapers, magazines, books, brochures, advertisements and the media in general. There are detailed guidelines for the selection of materials, including the following:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- item types.

1.2 Test item writing

Item writers are either practising teachers, consultants, or members of university staff. They are commissioned to write both discrete items, complete components or entire examination papers with strict regard to the syllabus brochure and the standard test model existing for each examination subject. Further guidance to item writers is given in the form of written instructions. Wherever possible and indicated, items are also taken from an item bank.

The editing process takes place in meetings of test constructors under the supervision of the Chief Co-ordinating Examiner for German, for ZDaF in meetings with participants from the Goethe-Institut.

1.3 Pretesting

All examination papers are pretested. After editing, the items are put into pretests, which are administered in Goethe-Institut language schools (for ZDaF), Volkshochschulen (VHS) and other institutes of adult education. Pretests are normally taken by some 200 candidates.

Pretests are returned, marked and analysed in order to provide statistical data on the discrimination and facility of each item. As a result of the feedback of statistical data to the groups of item writers and editors, individual items can be modified as necessary.

MARKING

2.1 Process

All tests are marked centrally in the Examinations Office of the DVV in Frankfurt, with the exception of the writing paper of the ZDaF, which is double marked by selected and specially trained

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Examiners outside the examination centres and then forwarded to the Examinations Office. Both candidates' answers and Examiners' marks are recorded on mark sheets, which can be processed by an optical mark reader (OMR). After a series of careful logical checks, these are relayed to EDP for results to be computed and detailed result sheets and certificates for candidates who receive a pass-mark to be printed.

Oral components involve either one (GBS) or two Examiners (ZDaF) interviewing candidates individually. Marks are also recorded on standardised OMR forms and sent to the Examinations Office for processing.

2.2 Training

Markers are trained in advance of each examination season at sessions led by members of staff of the Examinations Office in co-operation with the Chief Co-ordinating Examiner for German. These sessions are held in Frankfurt or nearby.

For the oral components of the examinations, training videos of mock interviews are used. Examiners assess the candidates, and the marks they give are then compared with those given by experienced Markers in order to standardise assessment.

2.3 Checking

For the ZDaF, random checks on the writing paper are carried out by a team of supervisors who meet in the Examinations Office in Frankfurt under the supervision of the Chief Co-ordinating Examiner for German. In cases of deviation from the original mark, careful and detailed feedback is given to the Examiners who originally marked the script.

Results

Results, in the form of detailed results sheets for each candidate and certificates for those who have passed, are sent out within a few days (GBS) and a maximum of five weeks (ZDaF) after receipt of the OMR documents from the examination centres in more than ten European countries. The results are then sent to candidates. Grades awarded are: Very Good (Sehr Gut), Good (Gut), Satisfactory (Befriedigend) and Pass (Bestanden). Candidates who fail can retake the examination in separate parts.

Candidates have a right to ask for duplicates of their results sheets and certificates for a period of ten years.

Security

Security is given high priority. Examination data are carefully controlled and precautions are taken at each stage of the examination process. External printers must meet strict security requirements. Except for oral papers, which are sent to the Examiners for preparation purposes, the sealed packages of examination documents can be opened only on the day of the examination.

GRUNDBAUSTEIN DEUTSCH (GBS DaF)

This examination tests language performance at an elementary level. It concentrates on the ability to communicate in German in real-life situations which can occur in Germany. The ability to write in German is not tested. The examination is usually taken after approximately 200 hours of teaching.

The examination consists of two sections: a written component and an oral component.

The written component consists of the following parts:

COMMUNICATIVE TASKS

Candidates are tested by assessing their reaction to fairly simple everyday situations given to them on audio recording. Typical situations might be welcoming someone, asking the way or congratulating someone. The audio prompts are very short and usually consist of one line. This component consists of fifteen items. The item type is three-option multiple-choice.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Candidates listen to a brief conversation (in a shop, in an office, or at home) or a piece of general information (on a TAM, in a department store, or at the railway station). The listening text is divided into three or four separate parts. Candidates are given ten statements (three or four for each listening text) which may be true or false.

READING COMPREHENSION

This component consists of fifteen true/false items. Short written texts, mostly personal letters or advertising texts of various kinds, must be read. The reading texts are based on authentic material. People who want to travel in Germany find these kinds of texts extremely useful since they are samples of text which can be seen everywhere in Germany (in the streets, on trains, in offices, etc.).

The oral component consists of the following parts:

EVERYDAY SITUATIONS

After some introductory words between Examiners and candidate four situations are read out in a natural way by the Examiner, so that the candidate can react appropriately. The situations are again taken from everyday life.

GUIDED CONVERSATION

The Examiner asks six questions which the candidate answers. If the answers are very short the Examiner tries to assist by giving prompts such as 'Why?', 'Why not?', or 'Really?'

Marking

The examination is marked centrally in the Examinations Office. The marks given in the oral part of the examination are added to those given for the other components.

Marks

No certificate is issued in this examination, but the candidate is given the results gained in the written and in the oral part. For example: the candidate is told that she or he scored ten out of fifteen possible points in a particular section of the examination. When a candidate has gained 60% of the total possible score the examination is passed and an evaluation sheet is issued.

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DEUTSCH
Goethe-Institut (GI)

The Goethe-Institut is a non-profit-making, publicly funded organisation with its head office in München. It was founded in 1951 to promote a wider knowledge of the German language abroad and to foster cultural co-operation with other countries. As a worldwide organisation with over 140 centres in seventy-six countries serving over 108,000 students, the Goethe-Institut plays an important role in providing access to German language and culture all over the world.

The Goethe-Institut offers seven examinations, ranging from Threshold to very advanced level, and leading to internationally recognised qualifications in German.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)
Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)
Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP)
Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS)

The examinations can be taken at Goethe-Institut centres in Germany and abroad, and at other authorised examination centres.

The *Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom* (GDS) is not presented in this document, because it is above level 5. This is an examination demanding near-native fluency, which is recognised in certain countries as proof of the ability to teach the German language. The examination was developed in co-operation with the University of München.

Examples of materials can be found at: **http://www.goethe.de**

For further information about the availability of these examinations around the world and about registration procedures and dates, please ask at your nearest Goethe-Institut or write to the head office:

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GOETHE-INSTITUT

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

For the Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache, which is set in conjunction with the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, and for the Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung and the Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung, item writers are commissioned to select materials; for the Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom, materials are selected by the Goethe-Institut and staff of the University of München. Materials are taken from a wide range of sources, including books, newspapers and magazines, brochures, advertisements and radio items. There are detailed guidelines for the selection of materials, including the following:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- item types.

1.2 Test item writing

Item writers are either practising teachers, consultants, staff at the University of München or members of the Goethe-Institut's examinations team. They are commissioned to write both discrete items and whole tests. Guidance to item writers is given in the form of written instructions and/or as individual in-service training.

The editing process for the ZDaF takes place in meetings of participants from the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband and the Goethe-Institut. Materials for the ZMP and the ZOP are edited by the Subject Officer in consultation with team members. For the KDS the editing is done by the Chair (who is from the University) and the Subject Officer (an employee of the Goethe-Institut).

1.3 Pretesting

For the ZDaF and ZMP all components which test reading, listening comprehension and structural competence are pretested. After editing, the items are put into pretests, which are administered in Goethe-Institut language schools and the Volkshochschulen in Germany. Each pretest is taken by 150–200 candidates.

Pretests are returned, marked and analysed in order to provide statistics on the discrimination and facility of each item. Feedback is also obtained by means of a questionnaire for teachers on the level of difficulty and appropriacy of texts and test items. As a result of this process, individual items can be modified as necessary.

The pretests for the ZOP and KDS are administered in classes of the Goethe-Institut to obtain feedback on the level of difficulty and the appropriateness of texts and test items.

MARKING

2.1 Process

The ZDaF, ZMP and ZOP are marked at local examination centres by experienced teachers and/or trained Examiners. The written components for the KDS are sent to the Head Office in München, from where they are distributed to a team of experienced Markers. Each script is marked by two Examiners.

For the oral components of the ZDaF, ZMP, ZOP and KDS each candidate is interviewed individually by two Examiners. Marks are recorded on mark sheets. Mark sheets for the ZDaF, ZMP and ZOP are kept at the examination centres, while those for the KDS are sent to the Head Office in München.

2.2 Training

Markers are trained in seminars which are led either by members of staff in the Examinations Unit, or by Goethe-Institut staff abroad. They are held either at the Goethe-Institut Head Office in München or locally. During training seminars for the writing component, mark schemes and sample scripts are discussed.

For the oral components of examinations, training videos of mock interviews are used. Examiners assess the candidates, and the marks they give are then compared with those given by experienced Markers in order to standardise assessment.

2.3 Checking

For the ZDaF, ZMP and ZOP random checks on the writing component are carried out by the staff of the examinations unit. The KDS is systematically checked. Each script is marked twice centrally, and if the grades differ it is marked a third time before a final grade is given.

Results

Results of the locally marked ZDaF, ZMP and ZOP are given in the form of marks and grades (Very Good, Good, Fair, Pass and Fail) and are issued within a few days. For the KDS result slips and certificates are sent to the examination centres after six to eight weeks, and certificates are issued after three to four months.

Security

Examination dates are carefully controlled and precautions are taken at each stage in the examination process. Each examination centre appoints a person responsible for the security of the tests. External examination centres are carefully checked with regard to their suitability before being approved. Examination centres for the KDS are required to follow strict security procedures.

ZERTIFIKAT DEUTSCH ALS FREMDSPRACHE (ZDaF)

This is an examination at a lower intermediate level, which tests competence in all the language skills. It is recognised in Germany as fulfilling the language requirement for entry to a Fachoberschule (technical college) and for the attainment of German citizenship. This examination has been developed and is administered in collaboration with the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband. It also forms part of the suite of examinations offered in nine European languages by the International Certificate Conference.

This examination is under revision; the new examination will probably be launched in 1999.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to read factual texts for both gist and specific detail. The texts are taken mainly from magazines.

There are up to five texts (total length of text: approximately 1,000 words) with fifteen multiple-choice items. A list of text types used can be found in the syllabus.

WRITING

There is one task, which is to write a personal letter of approximately 100 words in length. Candidates must write one or two sentences on each of the five guiding points given. The task includes a clear statement of the purpose and audience.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand dialogues and short texts (announcements, monologues) about topics of general interest. They are expected to understand the gist as well as specific details.

There is a dialogue and five short texts (total length of texts: between twelve and fifteen minutes) with twenty-five items. The following task types are used: true/false, multiple-choice.

The text types used are specified in the syllabus.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested by two Examiners. They must be able to answer questions on topics of general interest, using common communicative functions (e.g. expressing needs, preferences and opinions, making requests, passing on other people's opinions, giving and seeking advice, etc.).

There are two sections. In one section the candidate must answer questions on a topic of general interest. Each candidate has a choice of three topics. The other involves taking part in everyday communicative situations. Each candidate is given five situations.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates must be able to demonstrate a knowledge of specific aspects of the language (grammar and lexis) which are essential for everyday communication. This test has one section with sixty multiple-choice items.

Weighting of components

Each component carries 25% of the total marks except for Writing and Structural Competence (12.5% each).

Results

There are four pass grades: Sehr Gut Bestanden (Very Good), Gut Bestanden (Good), Befriedigend Bestanden (Satisfactory) and Bestanden (Pass). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

ZENTRALE MITTELSTUFENPRÜFUNG (ZMP)

This is an examination at an advanced level, requiring competence in all the language skills. It is recognised as fulfilling the language entry requirement for technical colleges and Studienkollegs.

This examination has been revised and the new version will be available as from October 1997.

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read and understand four authentic non-fictional texts on topics of general interest. They are expected to demonstrate a variety of reading skills including skimming, scanning and distinguishing opinions from factual information. They must also be able to complete a summary which takes the form of a cloze test. Texts are taken from newspapers, magazines, leaflets, books, etc.

There are thirty items of the following task types: matching, multiple-choice, gap-filling, true/false.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to complete two writing tasks. The first is a free writing task, the second is a guided transformation of an informal letter into formal register. In the first task candidates demonstrate their ability to write non-specialist texts expressing opinions and giving information related to their personal experiences. They are expected to take into account a defined audience and purpose. For task one a choice of three topics is given, from which candidates must select one. Responses for task one should be approximately 200 words long.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand two non-fictional texts. There are two sections. Section one consists of a conversation which lasts about two minutes, and section two consists of a radio broadcast lasting about ten minutes. Candidates hear text one only once, text two twice. There is a total of twenty items. Candidates are required to take notes on factual information, and to understand the gist as well as specific details. There are three item types: short answer, matching and multiple-choice.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. They are expected to participate actively in a conversation on topics of general interest. They should be able to display a range of communicative skills, including the ability to describe, narrate, make proposals, and to express opinions and ideas in a logical and structured way.

The first task consists of looking at two photographs and discussing the topic with the Examiners. This task is followed by a problem-solving task with a visual or written prompt.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted at 25% of the total marks.

Results

There are four pass grades: Sehr Gut (Very Good), Gut (Good), Befriedigend (Fair) and Ausreichend (Pass). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

ZENTRALE OBERSTUFENPRÜFUNG (ZOP)

This is an examination at an advanced level, which is recognised by the German universities for matriculation purposes.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read and understand authentic non-fictional texts on topics of general interest taken from newspapers and magazines. They must show comprehension of gist, detailed content, tone and register. They are also tested on their wider knowledge of vocabulary, phrasal expressions and idioms.

There is a single text of about 800 words in length, with a total of about twenty items. Candidates must demonstrate comprehension of the text by answering open-ended questions on the text and by finding synonyms to certain words, for example.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to write non-specialised texts which are formally and structurally accurate, with coherent expression of ideas and appropriate register.

There are two types of writing tasks from which the candidate chooses one. The first is a composition on a topic which deals with aspects and problems of contemporary life; the second is a composition on one of the four set books. Responses should be at least 250 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand longer monologues on topics of general interest. Texts are taken from radio programmes, speeches and lectures.

There is one single text lasting approximately ten minutes. Candidates demonstrate their understanding of the text by taking notes and by writing a short guided summary of the text.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. Candidates must be able to talk on a topic which deals with aspects and problems of contemporary life and to participate actively in the discussion of such a topic. They are expected to organise their spoken discourse in such a way that main and subordinate points are clearly distinguished.

Candidates have fifteen minutes to prepare a reading text and questions set on it. The first part of the oral examination involves reading the text aloud and discussing the topic with the Examiners. The second part consists of a talk on a topic of general interest, which is given one week in advance and which tests the ability to talk coherently and logically. Finally, the candidate participates in a conversation with the Examiners on the topic of the talk.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge of the language system by completing tasks based on the topic of a reading text.

There is one section with approximately forty items of the following task types: rational cloze, finding synonyms/antonyms and sentence transformations.

Weighting of components

The Writing, Speaking and Structural Competence components carry approximately 25% of the total marks each, Reading approximately 15%, and Listening approximately 10%.

Results

There are three pass grades: Sehr Gut (Very Good), Gut (Good), and Befriedigend (Fair). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

KLEINES DEUTSCHES SPRACHDIPLOM (KDS)

This is an examination at an advanced level, which is recognised by German universities for matriculation purposes. The examination is developed in co-operation with the University of München.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates must be able to read authentic literary texts. They must be able to understand the gist as well as specific details. They are also expected to demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary, phrasal expressions and idioms. Texts are taken mainly from works of contemporary literature.

There is a single text of about 800 words in length. There are twenty-five to twenty-nine items of the following task types: open-ended questions and finding synonyms.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to produce written texts which are formally and structurally accurate, with coherent expression of ideas and register.

There are two writing tasks related to the set books. One task is of a more general nature, and includes giving a personal view on a topic. Responses should be between 200 and 300 words in length. The second task is related to a short extract from a book (about thirty lines) and responses should be between 250 and 300 words in length. There are four set books, and candidates must write on two of them.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. Candidates must be able to talk about a topic which deals with aspects and problems of contemporary life and to participate actively in a conversation about such a topic. They are expected to organise their spoken discourse in such a way that main and subsidiary points are clearly distinguished.

Candidates have forty minutes to prepare a reading text and a talk. The first part of the test involves reading the text aloud. They then have to give a talk on a topic of general interest, which tests the ability to talk coherently and logically. Finally, the candidate participates in a conversation on the topic of the talk.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates must be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the language system. They are expected to do this by completing tasks which communicate facts on topics of current interest.

There is one section with approximately forty items of gap-filling and sentence transformation task types.

DICTATION

Candidates must be able to understand a text (fictional or non-fictional) and to write using correct spelling and punctuation.

There is one text of approximately 150 words in length. This is read four times: first at normal speed, then in small units (each read twice), then again at normal speed.

Weighting of components

The Speaking and Reading components each carry 22.2% of the total marks. Dictation and Structural Competence 11.2% each and Writing 33.2%.

Results

There are three pass grades: Sehr Gut (Very Good), Gut (Good) and Befriedigend (Fair). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

ENGLISH
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)

The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) has charitable status as an institution of the University of Cambridge. It was established in 1858 in order to set standards of efficiency for schools in the UK, although today it aims to provide an educational assessment service worldwide. The English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Division is responsible for supervising the production of examinations and for their continual development to meet the changing needs of candidates. There is close collaboration with the British Council, which includes the administration of examinations abroad.

UCLES offers five main EFL examinations covering a range of abilities.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Key English Test (KET)
Preliminary English Test (PET)
First Certificate in English (FCE)
Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)

These examinations can be taken at centres in the UK and abroad. KET and PET have six fixed administrations a year while the other examinations are taken in June and December. Registration of candidates is the responsibility of Local Secretaries appointed by UCLES, who ensure correct completion of entries and send them back to Cambridge. Candidates must register six weeks before the KET and PET examinations and eight to ten weeks before the FCE, CAE and CPE examinations. In addition to the examinations listed here, UCLES provides a wide range of English language examinations for specific purposes, including tests for children, tests of English for academic purposes and of business English.

Results are issued to centres approximately eight to ten weeks after the examination.

For further information regarding Cambridge examinations, please write to:

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English as a Foreign Language Division
UCLES
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ENGLAND

Tel: +44-1223-553311
Fax: +44-1223-460278
E-mail: efl@ucles.org.uk

UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
Local Examinations Syndicate

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Item writers are commissioned to select material from a wide range of sources, which include books, newspapers and magazines, brochures, advertisements and radio items. They are given detailed guidelines for selection of material, including the following:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- reference to the Cambridge English Lexicon;
- item types.

The material is vetted by the Chair and the Subject Officer for the paper so that unsuitable material can be rejected before the editing stage.

1.2 Test item writing

Item writers are either practising teachers or freelance consultants. An annual schedule for the production of test materials is set up and writers are commissioned usually twice a year to write materials. They participate in the editing process, which is led by the Chair and the Subject Officer for the paper.

1.3 Pretesting

Materials written for Reading, Structural Competence and Listening papers are pretested. After editing, the items are put into short pretests, including anchor items to allow calibration, which are sent to centres worldwide. Each pretest is taken by over 100 candidates. Tests are returned, marked and analysed in order to provide statistics on the discrimination and difficulty for each item. There are three pretesting sessions a year with approximately 100 tests altogether for all the main examinations. Examination candidates and teachers are invited to provide feedback.

Some trialling of Writing and Speaking test materials also takes place.

MARKING

2.1 Process

Objective tests are marked by a system of on-site supervised marking, and there is extensive use of computerised methods of marking, involving optical mark readers (OMRs).

FCE and CPE writing components are marked by Examiners, who are practising teachers, working under the guidance of team leaders. Team leaders are guided by the Principal Examiner for the paper. For the CAE writing paper, each script is marked by two Examiners during an intensive marking session.

Speaking components involve either one or two trained Examiners assessing candidates individually or in pairs. Marks are recorded on OMR (Optical Mark Reader) sheets and sent to UCLES.

2.2 Training

For written papers, mark schemes and sample scripts are discussed by the team leaders and the Principal Examiner in order to standardise marking. Assistant Examiners either mark sample scripts before the marking process begins, or have to send a sample of marked scripts to team leaders for checking.

For the speaking components, training involves Examiners conducting mock tests with students. During the training and standardisation process, Examiners watch videos of Speaking tests with candidates and make their own assessments. Their marks are then compared with those given by the Senior Team Leaders.

With an operation of a large, international scale, it is crucial to ensure the standardisation of the conduct and assessment of the Speaking Tests. In order to ensure these objectives, UCLES has set up a global framework of Oral Examiner Team Leader Systems.

Oral Examiners are assigned to teams, led by Team Leaders, who in turn report to a national Senior Team Leader. Senior Team Leaders play a crucial role in monitoring the standardization of the Speaking Tests and in ensuring that the same professional requirements for the conduct of the Speaking Tests are met in all centres.

They are responsible for the training and co-ordination sessions run for Oral Examiners before examination periods, the monitoring of tests, the support of Examiners and liaising between their team of Examiners and UCLES.

2.3 Checking

During the assessment process many forms of checking take place to ensure the marks awarded are accurate.

For the tests of writing, UK-based team leaders check samples of scripts from Examiners and write reports on their performance. During oral examining, Team Leaders make checks on the Examiners in their teams.

Results

Results, in the form of grades, are sent to Local Secretaries six to eight weeks after the examination. They then send individual results slips to candidates. These give grades A, B, C (Pass), D and E (Fail) for CPE, CAE and FCE and 'Pass with Merit,' 'Pass,' 'Narrow Fail' or 'Fail' for KET and PET. Candidates receive certificates a few weeks later.

Security

Security is given a high priority. Examination dates are carefully controlled and precautions are taken at each stage of the examination process. External printers must meet strict security requirements. In countries where there is either a Cambridge representative or a British Council Office, these are consulted regarding the suitability of a potential examination centre before approval by UCLES is given. The Local Secretaries, who receive tests and send back scripts, are required to follow strict procedures.

Inspections of examination centres are carried out routinely, as part of the system of quality control and security.

KEY ENGLISH TEST (KET)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Waystage specification. It provides an early learning objective for learners, enabling them to meet their basic communication needs in English, and representing a first step towards the Preliminary English Test and the other, more advanced, Cambridge examinations.

There are three components:

READING / WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to read in order to extract factual information from short, simple texts taken from a variety of genuine sources, and to write in order to complete simple texts. Use is made of graphics and layout in contextualising and adding to the authenticity of the task. Reading texts are taken from sources such as signs, forms, instructions on machines, guides, product packaging and newspapers. Texts used for writing include forms and simple messages and letters.

There are forty objective items relating to a number of reading-based activities and fifteen items requiring short written responses (one or two words, or a number) relating to reading-based activities. There is also a short writing task. The following task types are used: multiple-choice, matching and gap-filling.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to follow short spoken exchanges, and to extract specific information without necessarily understanding every word. Listening texts are adapted from authentic texts or specially written to simulate authenticity. They include public announcements, traffic information and telephone conversations. Texts are read at a rate a little slower than normal speech.

There are fifteen objective items and ten items requiring short answers (one word, a number, etc.). The task types used are multiple-choice and matching.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested in pairs by two Examiners (an Interlocuter and an Assessor) and are required to participate in conversation about themselves and other topics, both with each other and with the Examiner.

Weighting of components

Listening and Speaking each carry 25% of the total marks, and Reading/Writing 50%.

Results

There are two pass grades: 'Pass' and 'Pass with Merit,' and two fail grades: 'Narrow Fail' and 'Fail'. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST (PET)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification, which tests the language skills needed to survive in social and work situations in an English-speaking environment.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand public notices and signs. They must also be able to read and understand short factual texts in detail, scan factual material for information and read passages for gist (identifying the source, understanding the purpose and attitude of the writer, etc.). Texts are usually authentic public notices, signs, advertisements, news articles, etc.

There are five compulsory sections, each with five to ten items of the following task types: multiple-choice, matching, true/false.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to give information, report events, describe situations and express opinions, taking into account the specified audience and purpose.

There are three compulsory tasks. The first requires the candidate to transform the grammatical structures of five sentences so that they keep their original meaning. The second involves filling in a form containing ten items. The third requires the candidate to complete a short, relatively free writing task (letter, postcard, report etc.) conveying information, usually to an English-speaking friend. The response should be about 100 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand short dialogues and extract factual information (location, identification, opening times, weather, etc.) from them. They are also expected to make sense of longer dialogues and to show an appreciation of the attitudes of the speakers. Listening texts include specially recorded announcements, news items and conversations.

There are four sections, lasting approximately thirty minutes in all, with twenty-five items of the following task types: multiple-choice, gap-filling, true/false.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested in pairs by two Examiners (an Interlocuter and an Assessor) and must be able to carry on a general conversation about themselves, participate in a role-play and talk about a situation depicted in a photograph. Candidates are expected to respond to photographs, pictures, etc., to ask and understand questions and to answer appropriately.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted and carries 25% of the total marks.

Results

There are two pass grades: 'Pass' and 'Pass with Merit', and two fail grades: 'Narrow Fail' and 'Fail'. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH (FCE)

This is an examination at an intermediate level, requiring competence in all the language skills. It is widely recognised in commerce and industry, and by educational institutions in Britain and overseas as proof of language ability at the intermediate level. There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read texts of various kinds (informative and general interest) and to show understanding of the gist or main points as well as points of specific detail. Candidates are tested on lexical and grammatical knowledge.

There are four tasks, each of which consists of a text and corresponding comprehension tasks. The task types used are multiple matching, multiple choice, and gapped text, and there is a total of 35 items.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write non-specialised texts of a descriptive, narrative and discursive nature.

Candidates must complete two tasks: a compulsory one and one from a choice of four. Task types are chosen from the following: letters, articles, reports, compositions. They are written for a specified purpose and target reader.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand conversations, announcements, news, radio features, etc. at an intermediate level.

The paper contains four parts, each of which consists of a recorded text or texts and corresponding comprehension tasks. Items are of the following task types: multiple-choice, note-taking, gap-filling, multiple-matching, selection from 2 or 3 possible answers.

SPEAKING

The standard test format is two candidates and two Examiners. Candidates must be able to respond to questions and interact in conversational English. Prompt materials are used by the Examiners to stimulate and guide the interaction.

The paper contains four parts, including short exchanges with the Examiner and with the other candidate, and a 'long turn' of about one minute. In the first part, the candidates are encouraged to give information about themselves. The second and third parts make use of visual prompts, and the fourth part is a discussion of matters related to the theme of the third part.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and control of the language system by completing a number of tasks, which are based either on authentic or on specially written texts.

There are five tasks, containing items of the following task types: multiple-choice cloze, open cloze, 'key' word transformations, error correction, word formation.

Weighting of components

The five FCE papers total 200 marks, after weighting. Each paper is weighted to 40 marks.

Results

There are three pass grades (A, B and C) and certificates are awarded to all successful candidates. Candidates who achieve a grade D or E are judged not to have reached the required standard for **FCE**.

CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH (CAE)

This examination provides a high-level final qualification in the language for people wishing to use English for professional or study purposes. CAE is recognised by the majority of British universities as an English Language entrance requirement for foreign applicants.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read and understand texts taken from magazines, newspapers, leaflets, etc. They should demonstrate a variety of reading skills including skimming, scanning, deduction of meaning from context and selection of relevant information to complete the given task.

There are four compulsory texts, giving a total of about 3,000 words. There are forty to fifty items. The three main task types are: multiple-matching, multiple-choice, gap-filling (at paragraph level).

WRITING

Candidates are expected to complete non-specialist writing tasks in response to the stimuli provided (reading text and task descriptions). Texts are taken from articles, leaflets, notices, formal and informal letters, etc. Both audience and purpose are made clear.

The first section is compulsory and candidates must complete one or more tasks in response to a reading input which is usually made up of several short texts. The second section involves choosing one of four tasks from a range of writing activities (letters, articles, instructions, messages, etc.). Responses should be about 250 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand each text as a whole, gain detailed understanding and appreciate gist and the attitude of the speaker. They must also be able to identify and interpret the context. Texts take the form of announcements, speeches, radio broadcasts, etc.

There are four sections lasting approximately forty-five minutes in all, with a total of about thirty to forty items. The first two sections consist of two short monologues, the third of a longer dialogue/interview and the fourth of conversational extracts. The tasks candidates are asked to perform include the following: information transfer, various types of matching, note completion and multiple choice.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested in pairs by two Examiners. They must be able to demonstrate a range of oral skills: interactional, social, transactional, negotiation and collaboration.

The candidates first introduce themselves and respond to questions about their interests, careers, etc. Each candidate is then given a set of visual stimuli which serve to encourage a 'long turn' from each candidate. The final two parts are linked. The candidates first complete a collaborative task. This is followed by further discussion between the candidates and both Examiners on points which have arisen from the collaborative task.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge of the language system by completing tasks based on authentic passages. They must complete six tasks with a total of approximately seventy items. The tasks are of the following types: gap-filling, proof-reading exercises, text completion, information transfer with register shift, text expansion (of notes etc.).

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted and carries 20% of the total marks.

Results

There are three pass grades (A, B and C), and certificates are awarded to all successful candidates. Candidates who achieve a grade D or E are judged not to have reached the required standard for **CAE**.

CERTIFICATE OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH (CPE)

This is an examination at an advanced level, which is recognised as an entrance requirement by British universities and for business and academic purposes overseas.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to show comprehension of gist, detailed content, tone and register. They are also tested on their wider knowledge of vocabulary, usage and grammatical control.

There are two sections. In the first section there are twenty-five multiple-choice items. In the second section there are three texts, each between 350 and 550 words in length, with a total of fifteen items. Candidates must demonstrate comprehension of the text by completing a number of multiple-choice items.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to write non-specialised texts of a descriptive, narrative and discursive nature.

There are five tasks from which the candidate chooses two. One of the five is based on an optional reading of one of three books. Responses should be approximately 300 or 350 words, as specified.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to extract information, interpret speakers' attitudes and recognise the implications of stress and intonation. Texts take the form of announcements, dialogues, extracts from radio programmes, etc.

There are usually three or four texts, each lasting between one and four minutes, with up to thirty items of the following task types: multiple-choice, true/false, matching information, gap-filling.

SPEAKING

Candidates may be tested either individually, in pairs or in groups of three. They must be able to discuss and comment on issues and express opinions.

The first task involves describing and comparing a set of thematically linked photographs. Candidates are then required to read a passage silently and to comment on, for example, its source, its intended audience etc. The final part consists of one or more communicative activities (discussion, planning, problem-solving, etc.).

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of current usage and control of the language system by completing a variety of tasks based partly on authentic texts. They are also required to read a text and answer comprehension questions and to summarise specified information from the text.

There are two sections. The first consists of forty-two items of the following four task types: cloze and three varieties of transformation exercise. The second section is a reading comprehension task with twelve to fifteen items and a summary writing task (approximately 80 words).

Weighting of components

Each component carries approximately 22% of the total marks except for Listening, which carries approximately 12%.

Results

There are three pass grades (A, B and C) and certificates are awarded to all successful candidates. Candidates who achieve a grade D or E are judged not to have reached the required standard for **CPE**.

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ESPAÑOL
Instituto Cervantes (IC) and Universidad de Salamanca (CIUS)

The Instituto Cervantes is a state organisation which was created by the Spanish Parliament in March 1991 for the promotion of the Spanish language and Spanish culture abroad. In furtherance of this aim, it is a member of the Policy Committee for the Diplomas of Spanish as a Foreign Language, and of the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The University of Salamanca, which was founded in 1218, has an international scientific and intellectual reputation which is as strong today as in past centuries. This reputation is due in part to its work in the promotion of the Spanish language and Spanish culture, and its teaching and research activities in the field of Spanish as a Foreign Language. For the last thirty years these activities have been under the direction of the University's International Courses Department.

For many years the University of Salamanca issued its own Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language. In 1991 an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Culture was signed, which made the University responsible for developing, setting, marking and evaluating the official Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE) which are issued and certified by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Instituto Cervantes is responsible for the administration of the examinations. Like the Instituto Cervantes, the University of Salamanca is represented on the Advisory Committee for the Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Certificado Inicial de Español como Lengua Extranjera (CIE)
Diploma Básico de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DBE)
Diploma Superior de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DSE)

The Diploma Básico examinations take place twice a year, in May and November. The Diploma Superior and the Certificado Inicial examinations take place once a year: the Certificado Inicial in May, and the Diploma Superior in November. Candidates can sit the examinations at the centres of the Instituto Cervantes or at other approved centres. Results are available through the examination centres within three months of the examination date.

For further information regarding these examinations, please write to the addresses below:

Sr. Alvaro García Sante-Cecilia
Sr. José Ramón Parrondo Rodríguez
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CURSOS INTERNACIONALES
UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA

EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Item writers are commissioned to select a fixed number of texts for five areas: the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and grammar and vocabulary. Materials for reading and listening components must be chosen from the following sources: general information, newspaper articles of an informative type, articles of a discursive nature and literature. They must be at an appropriate level of difficulty. Guidelines for the selection of materials are related to the following:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- item types.

Materials are then vetted before being presented to the Subject Officer and placed before the Academic Committee for a final decision.

1.2 Test item writing

The Cursos Internacionales department of the University of Salamanca includes among its staff a team of item writers who are experts in teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language. They produce test materials throughout the year. Refresher courses for item writers are run twice a year.

1.3 Pretesting

Materials for reading comprehension, listening comprehension and grammar and vocabulary components are pretested. This is done with the participation of 150–200 foreign language students. The results are statistically analysed and the accepted items are stored in an item bank. When a new examination is constructed, items are selected for it from the item bank.

MARKING

2.1 Process

Marking is co-ordinated by the Co-ordinator for Spanish Certificates. The listening, reading and grammar and vocabulary components are marked with the use of OMR technology at the University of Salamanca. The writing and oral tests are marked by trained Markers. These marks are also recorded on OMR sheets. The writing components are marked at the University of Salamanca and graded according to criteria related to:

- grammar;
- vocabulary;
- structure;
- appropriacy.

The oral examination is marked by two local Examiners: one acts as Interlocutor and awards a Pass or Fail grade, the other acts as Assessor and awards a grade in one of six areas:

- grammatical accuracy;
- pronunciation;
- vocabulary;
- fluency;
- appropriacy;
- interactive ability.

2.2 Training

For writing components there is a training course just before the marking period to ensure that compositions are marked to a uniform standard.

There is a training programme specifically for Oral Examiners. Approximately 500 Oral Examiners have been trained worldwide.

2.3 Checking

Scripts from writing components are double marked on a scale from zero to fifteen. The average mark from the two Assessors is taken. If there is a difference of more than three marks the script is marked a third time.

Results

Results, in the form of grades, are sent from the University to the Instituto Cervantes a maximum of one and a half months after receipt of the scripts. The Instituto then sends them to all the centres.

Security

The co-ordinator of Spanish qualifications is the only person who deals with the examinations once they have been approved. The same person is in charge of printing and is present during most of the printing process. The co-ordinator sends the examinations to the Instituto Cervantes, which is responsible for their despatch under seal to the centres.

CERTIFICADO INICIAL DE ESPAÑOL (CIE)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification, which tests the language skills needed to interact in social and work situations in a Spanish-speaking environment. It is the only officially accredited examination in Spanish as a Foreign Language at this level, and is recognised internationally by companies, chambers of commerce and educational establishments.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to read short texts on subjects related to everyday life. The texts are simple, practical and contextualised, being taken from public notices, signs, personal letters, newspaper articles, forms, etc.

There are twenty items of the following task types: multiple-choice, matching, true/false.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write short, simple texts of a practical nature.

There are two tasks. The first involves filling in a form. The second requires the candidate to complete a short, relatively free task conveying information; this may take the form of a notice, postcard, letter or note. The response should be about 80–100 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand short dialogues and simple, straightforward texts. They are expected to extract factual information, and also to be able to show an understanding of opinions, relationships between speakers, etc.

There are four sections, lasting a total of approximately twenty minutes, with twenty-two items of the following task types: multiple-choice, true/false, matching.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They must be able to carry on a general conversation about themselves, participate in a role-play, talk about a situation and express opinions on the basis of visual stimuli.

COMMUNICATIVE AWARENESS

Candidates are expected to be able to understand the relationship between the content of an utterance and its communicative aim. They must be able to choose the correct sentence for a given situation and recognise the lexical and grammatical suitability of an utterance to its communicative purpose.

There are three sections. The first involves matching a speech act to a communicative situation. There are five items. The second section involves identifying a word which is incorrectly used in a certain context. There are ten items. The third section requires the candidate to complete a text. There are fifteen multiple-choice items.

Weighting of components

The Speaking and Listening components each carry 25% of the total mark. Reading carries 20% and Writing and Communicative Awareness 15% each.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

DIPLOMA BÁSICO DE ESPAÑOL (DBE)

This is an examination at an intermediate level, which tests proficiency in all the language skills as well as knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. It is the only officially accredited test of Spanish as a Foreign Language at this level, and is recognised internationally by companies, chambers of commerce and educational establishments.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates must be able to read authentic texts which are mostly informative and of general interest. They must be able to understand the gist as well as specific details. Texts are taken from instructions, brochures and newspapers.

There are four texts with approximately twelve items of the following task types: true/false, multiple-choice.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write non-specialist texts of a personal nature. There are two tasks. The first requires the candidate to write a personal letter from a choice of two topics. The second task is to write a composition of a narrative, descriptive or discursive nature. Each response must be between 150 and 200 words in length. Some general guidelines are given.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand factual information. Texts are taken mainly from news items and other short pieces of information. However, one text is always taken from a conversation, interview, set of instructions, etc.

There are four texts lasting thirty minutes with a total of twelve items of the following task types: true/false, multiple-choice.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They must be able to discuss, explain and express opinions. Candidates participate in a dialogue with the Examiner on the basis of visual and written stimuli.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates must be able to demonstrate their knowledge and control of grammar and lexis at the required level.

There are two sections. The first consists of twenty multiple-choice items based on a gapped text. These test both grammar and lexis. The second requires the candidate to complete forty multiple-choice items. Each of these is based on a gap in a short dialogue.

Weighting of components

The Speaking component carries 30% of the total marks, Reading and Structural Competence 20% each and Writing and Listening 15% each.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

DIPLOMA SUPERIOR DE ESPAÑOL (DSE)

This is an examination at an advanced level which tests proficiency in all the language skills as well as knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. It is the only officially accredited test of Spanish as a Foreign Language at this level, and is recognised internationally by companies, chambers of commerce and educational establishments.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to read authentic texts of various types. The first is informative, the second states an opinion and the third is a descriptive text with a literary purpose. Texts are taken from newspapers, magazines or literary sources. There are three texts with ten items of the following task types: multiple-choice.

true/false. There is a fourth task which consists of matching questions and answers from a written interview.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write non-specialist texts of a professional nature.

There are two tasks. The first requires candidates to write a formal letter from a choice of two. They must expand on a number of points on given topics. The second requires the candidate to write a composition of a narrative, descriptive or discursive nature. Some general guidelines are given. Responses should be between 150 and 200 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand oral texts of different types and registers. There are no texts of a very colloquial nature. The purpose of the first text is to convey information. The second deals with giving advice, suggestions, recommendations, etc. The third is a conversation and the fourth a monologue, stating a personal opinion on a topic of general interest.

There are four texts with a total of sixteen items of the following task types: true/false, multiple-choice.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They must be able to communicate fluently in every situation, although they could hesitate on very abstract or specialised subjects.

On the basis of visual and written stimuli, candidates are asked to describe, argue and participate in a dialogue with the Examiner.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and control of grammar and lexis at the required level.

There are four sections. The first consists of twenty lexical and grammatical items based on a gapped text. The second has fifteen items to be matched with the correct meanings. The third has twenty grammatical multiple-choice items based on gapped sentences. The fourth requires candidates to find five grammatical errors in one or more texts.

Weighting of components

The Speaking component carries 30% of the total marks. Writing and Structural Competence 20% each and Reading and Listening 15% each.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

FRANÇAIS
Alliance Française (AF)

The Alliance Française is a state-approved, non-profit-making organisation. It was founded in Paris on 21 July 1883. It is dedicated to the teaching and dissemination of French language and culture. In 1996 the Alliance Française had approximately 1,300 centres, serving over 380,000 students in 133 countries. All over the world, the Alliance offers a variety of cultural activities and courses at all levels for people of all ages and occupations.

The Alliance Française offers seven different diplomas in language, civilization, literature, business French and commercial translation.

The examinations described in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 1 (CEFP1)
Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 2 (CEFP2)
Diplôme de Langue Française (DL)
Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes (DS)
Diplôme de Hautes Etudes Françaises (DHEF)

All these examinations may be taken at any one of 200 centres in seventy countries. They are set and marked in Paris. Dates of the examinations may vary and students should check details at their local Alliance centre. Results are usually available through local institutes one month after the examination.

For further information about these examinations, please write to the address below:

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Cedex 06
FRANCE

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Fax: +33-1-45491582
http://www.paris.alliancefrancaise.fr
E-mail: info@paris.alliancefrancaise.fr

EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Examination items are set by three teams composed of practising teachers: one of four people for the Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 1°degré, one of four people for the Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 2°degré and one of seven people for the Diplôme de Langue Française and the Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes. Each team member selects texts from a number of different sources, including novels and short stories, news items, letters and radio programmes. Choice of materials is guided by the following criteria:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- item types;
- number of items in the section.

1.2 Test item writing

Team members write their own items, which are then checked by a commission chaired by the Director of the Paris school or the teacher training adviser and sent back for modifications wherever necessary. At present there is no special training for item writers, but they are invited to attend all working groups concerned with examinations.

The CEFP commission produces twenty-eight to thirty tests a year. Between twenty and thirty are produced for the DL and fifteen for the DS. The approved tests are then left with the examinations department.

1.3 Pretesting

New materials are pretested and feedback on the existing material is obtained by asking teachers for comments on the difficulty and appropriacy of texts and examination items.

MARKING

2.1 Process

The written components are sent to the examination centre in Paris, which distributes them to a team of Markers, who are practising teachers from the Paris school. They mark following the marking criteria provided. Oral examinations take place in the various centres and are marked locally.

2.2 Training

Mark schemes are discussed and a standardisation meeting takes place before marking begins.

2.3 Checking

The Director of the Paris school or the teacher training adviser checks random samples of scripts. Problem cases can be marked twice.

Results

Results, in the form of a list of passes – Very Good, Good and Fair and Fail, are sent to the Alliance Institutes. These are posted up for candidates to see. This is done within a week for candidates in Paris; it takes a month for Institutes abroad.

Security

At each centre a nominated person is responsible for security. The examination centre in Paris has an item bank from which test items are chosen. Each version can be used up to ten times at 220 different centres. The same version of a test is never used twice in the same country.

CERTIFICAT D'ETUDES DE FRANÇAIS PRATIQUE 1 (CEFP1)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Waystage specification. It tests the language skills needed to survive in situations of everyday life in a French-speaking environment.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read in order to extract factual information from short, simple authentic texts. These texts are taken from different sources: signs, forms, instructions on machines, guides, programmes, product packaging or short articles. There are three sections and twenty items of the following task types: multiple-choice, matching, gap-filling.

The component lasts thirty minutes.

WRITING

There is one task which is to write a personal letter of about 100 words in length. In this letter (or postcard), the candidates must give information, report events, describe a situation taking into account the person it is addressed to (relatives or friends).

The component lasts thirty minutes.

LISTENING

There are two sections. The first is a dialogue and several public announcements, traffic information, or weather reports, telephone messages on topics of general interest. Candidates must be able to understand main points as well as specific details. The second consists of identifying phonemes in discrete items.

The task types are: true/false and multiple-choice.

The component lasts twenty minutes.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually or in pairs. They are expected to keep up a conversation about themselves and provide suitable replies to questions about photos or drawings.

The component lasts ten minutes.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of specific aspects of the language (e.g. grammar and lexis) which are essential for everyday communication. There are twenty multiple-choice items based on gapped texts taken from a variety of genuine sources.

The component lasts twenty minutes.

Weighting of components

Listening and Speaking carry 55% of the total marks. Reading, Writing and Structural Competence carry 45%.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Successful candidates may apply for a certificate.

CERTIFICAT D'ETUDES DE FRANÇAIS PRATIQUE 2 (CEFP2)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification. It tests the language skills needed to interact in social and work situations in a French-speaking environment.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to read short factual texts, scan factual material for information and show an understanding of the structure of the language. They must also be able to understand themes, the attitudes of the writer and the effect the passage is intended to have on the reader. Texts are taken from magazines, newspapers, literature, etc.

There is one task with seven to ten items of the following types: multiple-choice. The component lasts twenty minutes.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to give information and advice or to report an event. Topics are taken from everyday life (invitations, cancellations, minor accidents, etc.). The instructions to the candidate specify both the purpose of the task and the audience at which it is aimed.

There is one compulsory task. Candidates write a letter (formal or personal) or a short composition. Spelling is taken into account in this test. Responses should be between 120 and 150 words in length.

The component lasts forty minutes.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand factual radio reports on sports, the weather, news, etc. They also have to distinguish between feelings expressed in messages.

There are two tasks. The first tests the understanding of a document by multiple-choice task type.

For the second task, candidates are expected to identify the types of feelings expressed in several messages.

The component lasts ten minutes.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested in pairs. They are expected to be able to express themselves on general topics, to take part in a discussion, and to defend their own point of view.

There are two tasks. After ten minutes' preparation time each candidate has three minutes to defend his or her point of view. Then they both have four minutes to debate the topic and reach an agreement.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to be able to use pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and common past tenses of verbs in context.

The component consists of gapped texts: the first one with multiple-choice items, the second with verbs to conjugate and the third is a sentence transformation exercise.

The component lasts twenty minutes.

Weighting of components

The Writing and Speaking components each carry approximately 29% of the total marks. The Reading, Structural Competence and Listening components each carry 14%.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Successful candidates may apply for a certificate.

DIPLÔME DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE (DL)

This is an examination at an intermediate level, requiring competence in all the language skills. It is recognised abroad as proof of language ability and is part of the qualification required in order for Portuguese nationals to teach French in Portugal. In Switzerland it is recognised as proof of the ability to do clerical work. This diploma is endorsed by the French Ministry of Education.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to read semi-authentic non-fiction texts of general interest and show understanding of gist as well as of specific details. They must be able to understand the author's point of view. Texts are taken from newspapers, magazines or books.

There are three sections. In the first section, candidates must demonstrate understanding of an authentic text of between 500 and 700 words in length. Items are of the following types: true/false, multiple-choice, open cloze, matching, rephrasing. In the second section, the task is to detect five extra words or expressions in a text of 150 to 200 words. Both tasks last fifty-five minutes. The third section forms part of the Speaking component. Candidates are expected to demonstrate understanding of a short text by making a report on it. This task lasts five minutes.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to report events and express opinions or feelings on a general topic. There is one task. The candidate is required to write a composition of between 120 and 150 words in length. The beginning and the end are given and the composition must be coherent.

Spelling in the composition is tested. This task lasts forty-five minutes.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand a recorded text of general interest. They must be able to understand the gist as well as specific details and to appreciate the point of view of the speaker(s). There is usually a single text with ten true/false questions. The task lasts twenty minutes.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They must be able to explain, rephrase and give opinions, demonstrating an ability to speak with correct pronunciation, fluency and accuracy. They must be able to express their likes and dislikes in conversational French.

There are three tasks. For the first one, candidates comment on a photograph, a cartoon or a picture. For the second task, they must comment on and react to a short newspaper article on a general topic. They are then required to discuss it with the Examiner and defend their point of view. The third task is outlined in the Reading section above. The three tasks last fifteen minutes.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate an intermediate level of knowledge and control of the language system. There is one section on vocabulary and one on grammar (morphology and

syntax) with different tasks. The items are of the following types: synonyms and antonyms, matching, word error detection, gap-filling with multiple-choice, cloze text, rephrasing. This component lasts forty-five minutes.

Weighting of components

Each of the five components carries 20% of the total marks.

Results

There are three pass grades: Très Bien (Very Good), Bien (Good), and Assez Bien (Fair). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

DIPLÔME SUPÉRIEUR D'ETUDES FRANÇAISES MODERNES (DS)

This is an examination at an advanced level, which also tests candidates' cultural knowledge (civilization option) or literary knowledge (literature option). It is recognised in Portugal as part of the qualification required for Portuguese nationals to teach French. This diploma is endorsed by the French Ministry of Education.

There are five components:

READING AND WRITING

Candidates must be able to understand and interpret documents and texts, and express their opinions and feelings. Candidates are also expected to be aware of tone and register and to make inferences from texts and documents. They must show the ability to generate natural written language in response to a variety of thematic stimuli. Formal conventions (punctuation, composition, etc.) are taken into account. Reading is also tested in this component.

There are two options: civilization and literature. For the civilization option the candidate must complete tasks based on contemporary cultural matters. The following task types are used: multiple-choice, true/false, gap-filling.

For both options there is a guided essay. The civilization option is based on one of the cultural topics covered in the syllabus. The literature option requires the candidate to write a commentary on an extract from one of the two literary works in the syllabus. Responses should be about 500 words in length.

The civilization option lasts two hours and forty-five minutes and the literature option lasts three hours and thirty minutes.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. They must demonstrate the ability to answer questions and interact fluently in French. Candidates must be able to participate in a discussion, give opinions, and justify likes and dislikes. The Examiner also tests candidates' listening skills. This is done through reading and commenting on a text. The component lasts twenty minutes.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate an advanced knowledge of grammar and lexis.

There are several tasks, including exercises which involve gap-filling, rephrasing sentences or rewriting passages.

The component lasts one hour and fifteen minutes.

DICTATION

There is a dictation of approximately 200 words. It is usually adapted from a contemporary literary text. The text is read through once from start to finish without interruption, then dictated sentence by sentence and finally re-read the whole way through. Time is allocated at the end for candidates to make any final changes to their text.

The component lasts thirty minutes.

RÉSUMÉ

Candidates are tested on their ability to understand and summarise a suitable text, usually a newspaper or magazine article of approximately 400 words in length.

The component lasts one hour and forty-five minutes.

Weighting of components

The Reading and Writing component carries 27% of the total marks, Listening and Speaking 27%, Structural Competence 23% and the Dictation and Résumé 23%.

Results

There are three pass grades: Très Bien (Very Good), Bien (Good), and Assez Bien (Fair). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

DIPLÔME DES HAUTES ETUDES FRANÇAISES (DHEF)

This is an examination at an advanced level which requires near-native speaker level linguistic skills. It is approved by the French Ministry of Education. In some countries, it is recognised as proof of the ability to teach French.

It includes five components. Candidates may choose between two options: civilization or literature.

READING

Candidates must be able to read and understand the gist and specific details of either authentic texts written by modern authors and dealing with the cultural issues which are listed in the

syllabus for the civilization option, or literary texts taken from the works of classical or modern authors which are listed in the syllabus for the literature option. They must demonstrate their knowledge of a wide vocabulary, both general and specific to the option they have selected.

WRITING

The civilization option includes two tasks.

For the first one, candidates are required to answer an open questionnaire (5 questions) which relates to one of the cultural themes which are listed in the syllabus.

The second task consists in the comprehension of a 250-word modern text dealing with another civilization issue. The text is followed by 5 open questions which constitute the bases and guidelines for a composition.

The literature option requires the candidate to write a composition commenting on a passage taken from one of the literary works listed in the syllabus.

For each option, the writing tests last four hours.

SPEAKING

The candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. They must be able to articulate their thoughts on a given topic (related to the option they have selected) in an organised spoken discourse, take part in a discussion, and express and justify personal opinions.

Examiners also test written comprehension by making candidates read aloud and comment on a text related to the syllabus of the option selected. The component lasts thirty minutes.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates must demonstrate their ability to make use of their lexical and grammatical knowledge, and set forth arguments.

There are two sections. The first one includes two drills on rewording and verb tenses (twenty items altogether).

The second consists of a discursive text (500 to 600 words) followed by three to four questions which involve comprehension, stating ideas, lexical organisation and logical structure. It is also accompanied by a writing task which aims at assessing the candidates' ability to write a summary, reword ideas, and express and justify their opinions.

The component lasts two hours and thirty minutes.

DICTATION

Candidates must be able to understand a text, which is usually taken from a contemporary work of literature, and to write it down while respecting commonly accepted grammar and spelling.

The text, which is about 250 words long, is read four times. It is first read in full at normal speed, then dictated in short units which are each read twice. Then, the text is read again in full for the last time.

The component lasts thirty minutes.

Weighting of components

The writing component carries 30% of the total marks, the speaking component 20%, the French civilization or literature component 20%, structural and reading competence 20%, and the dictation component 10%.

Results

There are three pass grades: Très Bien (Very Good), Bien (Good), and Assez Bien (Fair). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

GAEILGE
Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ)

ITÉ (Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann), the Linguistics Institute of Ireland, is the national centre for research on the teaching and maintenance of languages in Ireland, with special responsibilities for Irish. It was founded by the Minister for Education in 1972. Starting in 1977, a series of oral listening tests in Irish was developed for three levels of proficiency in primary schools (Bealtriail Ghaeilge ITÉ, Levels 1, 2 and 3). These are used in national surveys to monitor standards and to evaluate the effectiveness of different programmes of instruction. A series of tests (Trialacha Teanga ITÉ, Levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) is being developed for post-primary schools, and a three-level series (Basic, Levels 1 and 2) has been created, in conjunction with the National Council for Vocational Awards, for learners of Irish in continuing education in a vocational setting.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Réamhtheastas Gaeilge (RTG)
Bunteastas Gaeilge (BTG).

The examinations are administered in May at centres in Ireland and overseas.

For further information about these examinations, please contact:

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EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Tests are constructed by practising teachers of Irish as a Second or Foreign Language, some of them working full time for ITÉ, others contracted as item writers. Materials are taken from a wide variety of sources, including books, newspapers, journals, magazines, brochures, and radio broadcasts. Materials concerning the history and culture of Ireland are included to cater for the strong cultural interests of learners of Irish outside Ireland. Choice of materials is guided by the following criteria:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- item types.

1.2 Test item writing

Test tasks are set by experienced item writers, including full-time staff of the Language Testing Unit, and are then checked by senior staff from the Departments of Structural Linguistics and Modern Languages. External consultants, usually practising teachers or setters and markers of state examinations, are also used.

1.3 Pretesting

Pretesting is done on second-level learners of Irish as a Second Language in the state system. Pretesting on adult learners of the type that the test envisages is not possible because they are not to be found in large numbers in Ireland.

MARKING

2.1 Process

The written components are marked at ITÉ. The oral examination is marked locally, by one or two Examiners. All oral examinations are taped, and on their return to ITÉ the tapes are assessed by an external Examiner.

2.2 Training

Oral Examiners in Ireland are brought together in October and are familiarised with the marking procedures. Audio and video tapes are prepared for Markers overseas. The Markers of the written components meet in conference in ITÉ immediately prior to the marking in May or early June. A Chief Examiner's Report is prepared in the summer months and is used in the training programme for the following year.

2.3 Checking

All the oral examinations are checked by listening to the audio-tape. A sample selection of open-ended questions from the written components is marked twice, and the original mark adjusted if necessary.

Results

The results, in the forms of grades of Pass, Merit and Distinction, are returned to local centres before the end of June.

Security

The system for state examinations is followed, including regulations for storing and transporting draft materials, in both electronic and hard copy, and the use of listed security printers.

REAMHTHEASTAS GAEILGE (RTG)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Waystage specification. It tests candidates on the skills they will need to perform basic communicative tasks in an Irish-speaking environment. Successful candidates will have done at least half the work needed for the Bunteastas Gaeilge.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates have to extract essential, factual information from a variety of authentic and semi-authentic texts. Texts include public signs and notices, articles and advertisements from newspapers and magazines, passages from tourist brochures, and simple literary and historical texts. The reading component consists of four or five tasks and about thirty items, and candidates respond by ticking correct responses, matching items, or answering questions in English, including yes/no questions and open questions.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to fill in simple forms in Irish, and complete a variety of gap-filling exercises. They should also be able to convey or transcribe messages in the form of notes or comments, or send a short postcard-type greeting to a friend.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand simple conversations and announcements and to extract basic information from a variety of text-types, including radio broadcasts, simple exchanges, such as introductions, and simple transactional exchanges, such as requests for information. The test lasts thirty minutes and there are about thirty items.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. The Examiner engages the candidate in conversation on matters of interest to him or her. Candidates should be able to convey simple information about themselves and their background and interests, and express opinions on a variety of everyday topics. They are also asked to perform two simple role-plays. The examination is taped and lasts eight to ten minutes.

Weighting of components

Speaking and Listening each carry 25% of the marks, Reading 30% and Writing 20%.

Results

There are three grades for successful candidates: Pass, Merit and Distinction. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

BUNTEASTAS GAEILGE (BTG)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification. It tests the competence of the learner to function at survival level in social and work situations in an Irish-speaking environment.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates have to show understanding, in general or in detail, of a variety of texts likely to be encountered in an Irish-speaking environment. In addition to texts with a pragmatic function, such as notices, instructions, forms, and advertisements, texts dealing with aspects of Irish history and culture, in Ireland and overseas, are used. Candidates are expected to deal with lengthy texts, up to 500 words, showing skills of scanning and gist reading. They are sometimes required to infer the attitudes and intentions of the writers.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to perform basic writing tasks related to practical tasks that arise in everyday life. In particular, they have to write messages or letters of not more than 120 words in all, conveying specified information and attitudes, and showing awareness of the intended audience and purpose of the communication. In addition, there are form-filling tasks, gap-filling exercises and transformation tasks on given texts.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to be able to follow extended exchanges, pick out the argument and the main points, and infer the attitudes and intentions of participants. Announcements and news items may also be encountered.

The listening test lasts thirty minutes and consists of four or five tasks and about thirty items, including multiple-choice items and gap-filling tasks.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually or in pairs, and must be able to sustain conversations about themselves, their interests, and topical matters. They are also asked to participate in a role-play. The test lasts about ten to twelve minutes and is taped.

Weighting of Components

Each component carries 25% of the marks.

Results

There are three grades for successful candidates: Pass, Merit and Distinction. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ
Εθνικό και καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών

The School of Greek as a Foreign Language of the University of Athens forms part of the Interdepartmental Programme for the Teaching of Greek as a Foreign Language. This Programme was founded in 1991 by the Department of Philology (Section of Linguistics and Section of Modern Greek Literature) and the Department of Philosophy, Psychology and Education. Apart from the teaching of Greek, it is responsible for a postgraduate training course for teachers of Greek as a Foreign Language, the first of its kind in Greece, and for a number of research projects involving the production of syllabuses, teaching and testing materials.

The teaching of Greek at the University started in 1950 as part of the language programme of the University Club, which offered a number of languages to students. The Greek course was designed for foreign students who intended to study at the University of Athens. The certificate which is awarded was a prerequisite for their studies. It soon started accepting other students, who were not necessarily intending to study at the University. After its independence from the University Club and its integration with the Interdepartmental Programme, the School started expanding both in size and scope. It currently has 900 students and 35 members of teaching staff. It is adapting its teaching, and accordingly its testing, to the needs of its much wider public and to inter-European demands and standards; it is gradually adopting the syllabuses and curricula produced in the various research projects within the framework specified by the Council of Europe and ALTE and reforming its examination papers.

For further information, please write to the address below:

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EXAMINATION SYSTEM

The examination system is still under review, as the School adapts to the division into the five ALTE levels, with the new syllabuses and teaching materials which are currently being prepared in several research projects. At the moment the School offers three different tests which correspond to the Waystage, Threshold and Level 5.

The old Certificate of Proficiency ('Veveosi Elinomathias'), which was necessary for the matriculation of foreign students in the University of Athens, corresponded roughly to what is now known as the Threshold Level; it has now been modified and enriched to correspond more precisely to the specifications for this level.

The first experimental tests for the Waystage and for Level 5 were implemented last year and a revised version will be distributed this year. The former was developed for Erasmus students with no prior knowledge of Greek, who spend a semester in Athens attending courses in other languages, the latter for advanced learners who intend to teach Greek as a Foreign Language in their own countries.

Entrance to the Threshold examination is unrestricted, subject to the payment of a fee. The other two examinations are open for the moment only to those who have attended the corresponding courses offered by the school. All three examinations can only be taken on the premises of the School of Philosophy.

Βεβαίωση Ελληνομάθειας

Students are expected to communicate with ease orally in everyday social and work situations, to be able to produce short, mainly informal, texts, e.g. letters, and to understand with ease more complicated texts on general subjects, even if they do not know the meaning of all the words and expressions.

The test deals with three skills: reading, writing and listening.

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand texts of some complexity dealing with subjects of general interest, including public notices, signs and advertisements.

The comprehension of original texts is tested through multiple-choice questions. Candidates are expected to answer simple questions requiring short answers, matching, true/false and gap-filling.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to ask for and give information, describe events and situations and express opinions.

The test includes syntactical transformations of sentences without change of meaning, gap-filling in sentences and longer texts, a summary of a given text and the production of a text of 200 words (composition, letter, etc.) on one of two set subjects.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand short dialogues, to be able to extract the general gist of the conversation as well as some salient and crucial details in a variety of topics of general interest. They should also be able to understand short continuous speeches such as news items, weather forecasts, recorded messages, public announcements and simple stories.

ITALIANO
Università per Stranieri, Perugia (USP)

Of all the Italian institutions which conduct research into the teaching and acquisition of the Italian language and which foster knowledge of the Italian culture, the Università per Stranieri di Perugia (USP) is the oldest and most prestigious.

The Università per Stranieri di Perugia (USP) started with a number of summer courses in advanced cultural studies which were held at Perugia in 1921. For several decades it was run with the status of Public Institute of Higher Education under special administration.

It has, however, recently been appointed a University in its own right, consisting of a faculty of Italian Language and Culture and special centres for research, the WARREDOC (Water Resources Research Documentation Centre) and the CEDIUC (Central Italy Data Elaboration Centre).

The Faculty of Italian Language and Culture of the Universita per Stranieri di Perugia offers:

Ordinary and special courses in Italian Language and Culture;
Specialised and refresher courses;
University Diploma Course in Advertising Studies (DUTEP);
University Diploma Course in Teaching Italian to Foreigners (DUILIS).

The Certification Unit of the Università per Stranieri di Perugia has developed a five-level examinations system in order to assess learners of Italian as a Foreign Language. One of the main responsibilities of the Unit is the design and development of proficiency tests, and it is also in charge of the implementation of assessment programmes and the advancement of both applied and theoretical research.

The examinations described in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 1)
Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 2 (CELI 2)
Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 3 (CELI 3)
Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 4 (CELI 4)
Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 5 (CELI 5)

Examination centres are either Italian Institutes of Culture or locations recommended by the Institutes and approved by the University. All the examinations are held in June and November. Candidates register by paying the registration fee at least two months before the examination. Results, in the form of grades, are sent to examination centres approximately three months after the examination. Diplomas are also sent out to the examination centres, who forward them to candidates.

For further information regarding these examinations, please write to the address below:

Professoressa Paola Bianchi De Vecchi
Rettore, Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio, 4
06123 Perugia
ITALY

Tel: +39-75-5746218
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EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Materials for each level of the examinations are selected by a team of practising teachers. At each level there is a team leader, who acts as a co-ordinator for that level. The team leaders give detailed guidelines for selection of materials, including the following:

- skills to be assessed;
- subject matter;
- linguistic complexity;
- cultural considerations;
- reference to the University's Lexicon of Spoken Italian;
- item types.

The material is selected from a number of different sources, which include books, newspapers and magazines, brochures, advertisements and radio or television items. It is vetted by team leaders so that unsuitable material can be rejected before the editing stage.

1.2 Test item writing

Item writers are teachers at the Università per Stranieri. A course is being organised to train them in item writing and measurement theory. Item writers are commissioned to write both discrete items and whole tests. They participate in the editing process together with the team leaders.

1.3 Pretesting

After editing, the items are pretested both by different groups of students at the Università per Stranieri and by groups of students in different countries. Each test is taken by 50–100 candidates. Items which are found to need revision are substituted or corrected.

MARKING

2.1 Process

The writing components are marked at the Università per Stranieri by Examiners who are teachers at the University, according to criteria and scores prepared by the team leaders. Examiners can contact team leaders to discuss problems.

Objective components are clerically marked. For oral components two local Examiners and a representative of the Università per Stranieri generally interview candidates individually at the examination centre.

Marks are recorded on a mark sheet and sent to Perugia.

2.2 Training

Mark schemes are agreed upon after discussion between the teachers and the team leaders.

For the oral examinations, mock interviews are held with students at the Università per Stranieri. Recordings and videos of interviews with candidates are produced and these are used for practice assessments by Oral Examiners during courses and seminars held in Perugia or abroad. The marks they give are compared with those given by the team leaders.

2.3 Checking

Team leaders check random samples of scripts from the Examiners to assess their performance.

For oral components, team leaders make random checks on local Examiners during courses or seminars in order to assess the accuracy of their marking.

Results

Results, in the form of grades, are sent to candidates approximately three months after examinations take place. For CELI 1 Pass or Fail are the only grades given. For CELI 2, 3, 4 and 5 the pass grades are A, B and C; D and E are fails.

Security

Examination dates are carefully controlled and precautions are taken at each stage of the examination process. All the examination papers are printed by the Università per Stranieri.

Where they exist, Italian Institutes of Culture act as official examination centres. They are also consulted by the University with regard to applications to act as centres.

Each examination centre is required to follow strict procedures concerning the receipt and return of scripts and oral results.

CERTIFICATO DI CONOSCENZA DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA: LIVELLO 1 CELI 1

This is an examination at an elementary level, which tests the language needed for basic communication in everyday situations, in order to survive in an Italian-speaking environment.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to understand the gist of approximately twenty short written messages. Sources of texts are public notices, road signs, advertisements, news articles, letters, notes, signs, programmes, etc.

There are usually five tasks, with a total of approximately thirty items of the following task types: various types of matching, three-option multiple-choice.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to fill in the missing parts of short, simple texts of a descriptive or narrative kind which deal with everyday topics. They must also be able to expand short texts related to everyday situations and to give general information about themselves.

There are usually two tasks. The first is a gap-filling exercise with ten items. The second is a guided composition which reports on or describes a series of events. The composition should be about seventy words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand the gist of short messages related to everyday situations. They must be able to recognise the communicative function of the message and understand simple descriptions of people.

There are usually thirty texts, lasting fifteen minutes, with approximately thirty-five items of the following task types: matching, multiple-choice.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They are expected to talk about themselves and to describe important facts and situations. They must also demonstrate the ability to cope with everyday situations.

Candidates are first required to introduce themselves. They then take part in a role-play based on an authentic communicative situation. The final task involves describing a scene shown in a cartoon.

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Weighting of components

The Listening and Speaking components each carry 30% of the total marks, Reading 25% and Writing 15%.

Results

Results are given in the form of Pass or Fail and certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

CERTIFICATO DI CONOSCENZA DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA: LIVELLO 2 (CELI 2)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification. It tests the language skills needed to interact in basic social situations in an Italian-speaking environment.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates must be able to understand a variety of short written texts. They are expected to understand both the gist and specific details, in addition to scanning for factual information. Candidates must also be able to show an understanding of the grammatical function of words by filling gaps in simple phrases and texts. Texts are taken from public notices, advertisements, stories, cartoons, questionnaires, news items, etc. Such texts are not linguistically complex and have a clear underlying internal structure.

There are usually approximately fifteen short texts with between forty and forty-five items of the following task types: matching, gap-filling, multiple-choice gap-filling, three-option multiple-choice.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to write about daily routine, everyday events, personal preferences and other topics based on personal experience. They must be able to produce short written texts such as letters, postcards and messages, and also complete forms, questionnaires, etc., taking into account the specified audience and purpose.

There are usually three tasks. The first requires the candidate to fill in a form. The second and third involve writing two short, informal letters, a total of about 140 words, on different topics.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand the gist and relevant details of a large number of short texts. They must be able to understand aspects of context such as time, place, characteristics of the speakers, etc. They must also be able to answer true/false questions. Texts take the form of announcements, radio news items, advertisements, telephone conversations, etc.

There are usually twelve short texts lasting about fifteen minutes, with approximately forty items of the following task types: three-option multiple-choice, matching.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They must be able to handle a variety of basic communicative tasks and social situations.

The test begins with a general conversation in which candidates introduce themselves and respond to questions about themselves, their family, town, job and leisure-time activities. They then interact with the Examiner in a number of everyday communicative situations. The final task involves describing and commenting on a visual prompt (photograph, cartoon, etc.).

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted and is given 25% of the total marks.

Results

There are three pass grades (A, B and C), and all successful candidates are awarded certificates.

CERTIFICATO DI CONOSCENZA DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA: LIVELLO 3 (CELI 3)

This is an examination at an intermediate level, which tests the language skills necessary to deal with simple tasks and social situations in everyday life.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates must be able to understand authentic written texts, showing comprehension of the gist as well as specific details. Texts are taken from the press and from books on topics of contemporary interest.

There are three texts with approximately twenty-three items of the following task types: four-option multiple-choice, open-ended questions, matching.

WRITING

Candidates have to write a short composition on one of a variety of topics of general interest. They must also be able to write descriptions of their personal experiences, situations, people and aspects of modern society. Candidates are also expected to respond appropriately to some communicative tasks related to everyday life.

There is a choice of five writing tasks from which the candidate must choose two. Two of these are short compositions requiring responses of between 120 and 180 words in length. The other

three are communicative tasks requiring responses of between 80 and 100 words in length.

LISTENING

Texts are spoken by one or two native speakers and are often taken from broadcasts, news items, interviews, documentaries, etc. Candidates must be able to understand the text as a whole, as well as distinguishing specific details, identifying true and false information and interpreting the attitude of the speakers.

There are two texts lasting about twenty minutes with approximately twenty items. The items are of the following task types: four-option multiple-choice, gap-filling.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually, and are expected to be able to tell a story, relate facts and describe a situation or person. They must be able to do this in some detail and in a logical and structured way.

The first task involves describing and commenting on a picture or some other visual prompt. This is followed by summarising and discussion of a text. Finally, candidates complete a communicative task which may involve problem-solving, making a proposal, expressing a point of view, etc.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates must be able to apply their knowledge and control of the language system. They are expected to do this by completing a number of tasks based on authentic texts.

There are two sections with two tasks. The first is a gap-filling task, with between forty and forty-five items. The second has one task which involves constructing approximately ten short texts from given sentences.

Weighting of components

The Speaking component carries 30% of the total marks, Writing 20%, Listening and Reading 20% each and Structural Competence 10%.

Results

There are three Pass grades (A, B and C), and all successful candidates are awarded certificates.

CERTIFICATO DI CONOSCENZA DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA, LIVELLO 4 (CELI 4)

This is an examination at an advanced level, which is suitable for people who are required to study or work in an Italian-speaking environment. Candidates are expected to be able to discuss topics relating to their own particular interests and special fields of competence.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates must be able to understand texts related to areas of general and specialist interest. They must be able to understand the gist of the text as well as specific details and be able to make appropriate inferences. They must also be able to expand and summarise parts of texts.

Texts are taken mainly from newspapers and magazines. They deal largely with a range of general topics (e.g. current affairs). However, there are some short texts on more specific subjects (e.g. tourism).

There are approximately four texts with about twenty items of the following task types: four-option multiple-choice, matching, open-ended questions.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to write a composition on a topic chosen from the wide range offered. These include personal experiences, aspects of contemporary society and a topic requiring creative writing. Candidates must be able to organise their writing and fully develop a theme. They must also be able to summarise a text.

There are two tasks. The first is to select and summarise a text. For the second there is a choice of two tasks of which one must be attempted. These include letters, notes, invitations, reports, etc. Responses should be about 250 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand the text as a whole. They must also understand specific details and make inferences regarding the context. Awareness of the organisational structure and sensitivity to social and cultural references is also expected. Texts are taken from radio or television programmes, and normally involve one or more native speakers talking on a range of topics.

There are three texts lasting twenty minutes with a total of approximately thirty items. The following task types are used: gap-filling, matching, information transfer.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They are expected to participate actively in a conversation on a topic agreed beforehand. They must be able to discuss factual topics related to particular interests and areas of special competence. They have to be able to support opinions, explain in detail, hypothesise and express feelings. They should be able to demonstrate considerable fluency and use their vocabulary to communicate nuances in meaning.

The first task involves a conversation with the Examiner in which candidates are tested on their ability to interact and use social language. They are then asked to discuss a text they have previously seen, to describe and compare a set of thematically linked photographs, and to explain a diagram, form, table, schedule, etc.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates must show a knowledge of the language system. They are expected to do this by completing a number of tasks, which are based on use of structure and lexis.

There are three sections with a total of three tasks and approximately fifty items. The first section requires the candidate to do two gap-filling exercises with approximately thirty items. The second section requires the candidate to do a proof-reading exercise with approximately ten items. The third section involves a set of notes or other examples of abbreviated written Italian for expansion into a complete text.

Weighting of components

The Speaking component carries 30% of the total marks, Writing 25%, Reading 20%, Listening 15% and Structural Competence 10%.

Results

There are three pass grades (A, B and C) and certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

CERTIFICATO DI CONOSCENZA DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA, LIVELLO 5 (CELI 5)

This is an examination at an advanced level, which tests the language skills needed to deal with a wide range of situations in order to be able to interact in any social or professional context.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand literary and specialised texts as well as general reading. In addition to understanding the gist of the text and specific details, they must be able to demonstrate an awareness of nuances and subtlety, and use cultural knowledge to infer meaning from the text. Texts take the form of editorials, reports, specialised magazine articles and correspondence and works of contemporary literature.

There are three or four texts with approximately sixteen items of the following task types: four-option multiple-choice, open-ended questions.

Writing

Candidates must be able to express themselves effectively at a variety of levels of formality, and on practical, social and literary topics. They are expected to show sensitivity to differences in formal and informal style. The organisation of the writing should be very similar to that of an authentic Italian text, and must take into account a variety of specified audiences and purposes.

There are two tasks. The first task requires the candidate to write one composition from a choice of three. The topics are based on various aspects and problems of contemporary life, and the experience and opinions of the candidate regarding Italian culture. One composition is on one of the works of contemporary literature set as background reading. Responses should be between 320 and 360 words in length. The second task requires the candidate to complete a communicative task. This may be a letter, note, telegram or announcement. Responses should be approximately 170 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand the general meaning of a wide range of texts, including some of a more specialised type. They must be sensitive to social and cultural references and understand all forms and styles of speech. Texts take the form of news items, advertisements, conversations, discussions, literary excerpts, etc.

There are three sections with three or four texts. The first section consists of one text with a multiple-choice task. The second consists of one text with a matching task with ten items. The third section consists of one text with a gap-filling task with approximately ten items.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They are expected to be able to participate in a conversation based on a wide range of topics related to Italian civilization. They must be able to argue in support of their opinions, hypothesise, etc. They have to summarise and discuss a given text, to describe and comment on a visual prompt, and to explain and comment on a set of proverbs or sayings.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates must be able to demonstrate knowledge and control of the language system by completing a number of tasks, which are generally based on authentic passages.

There are three sections with a total of three tasks and approximately sixty items. The task types used are: multiple-choice gap-filling, gap-filling, proof-reading.

Weighting of components

The Speaking component carries 25% of the total marks, Writing 30%, Reading 20%, Listening 15% and Structural Competence 10%.

Results

There are three pass grades (A, B and C) and certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

The Italian certification project for these examinations has been planned and implemented by Dr Giuliana Grego Bolli and Dr Maria Grazia Spiti.

LËTZEBUERGESCH
Centre de Langues Luxembourg (CLL)

The Centre de Langues Luxembourg (CLL) is an institution established by the Ministry of Education. Its primary aim is the promotion of both the national language and foreign languages through the organisation of courses for adults and young adults. In order to meet the demand for language instruction in Luxembourg, where nearly a third of the population comes from abroad, the CLL provides language teaching for general and vocational purposes. It mainly offers Luxembourgish, French, German, English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Dutch courses. Other languages can be offered on a temporary basis if there is a need. A secondary aim is the certification of competence in different languages.

The CLL is responsible for the organisation of examinations and the certification of communicative competence in Luxembourgish. It is also the official examining centre in Luxembourg for the following institutions: the Alliance Française and DELF/DALF, UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), Goethe-Institut, Instituto Cervantes, De Nederlandse Taalunie, Università per Stranieri, Perugia.

The certificates in Luxembourgish awarded by the Centre de Langues Luxembourg are endorsed by the Ministry of Education. No particular conditions, in terms of residence or course attendance, are placed upon registration. Examinations take place twice a year.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Zertifikat Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (ZLaF)
Eischten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (1DLaF)
Zweten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (2DLaF)
Iweschten Diplom Letzebuergesch (IDL)

The LaF (Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch – Luxembourgish as a Foreign Language) provides for the separate assessment of oral and written skills. This is done in recognition of the fact that Luxembourgish is above all a language of oral communication whose written use is more limited. As reading comprehension is considered to be of greater importance than written expression, these competences are tested and certificated separately.

Each of the LaF examinations consists of three components: Reading, Writing and Listening/Speaking. Candidates may choose to take only one or two components, or to take the components at different levels. However, the higher level IDL consists of four components, all of which must be attempted.

For further information, please write to:

M. Ernest Wagner/Mrs. Ines Quaring
Centre de Langues Luxembourg
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L-2316 Luxembourg
LUXEMBOURG

Centre de Langues Luxembourg
Ministère de l'Education Nationale
Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

Tel: +352-40-39-41
Fax: +352-40-39-30

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

The test materials for the different levels and skills are written by members of the Board of Examiners ('jury d'examen') who are appointed for one year at a time by the Ministry of Education on the recommendation of the CLL. All oral and written tests are based on materials related to social, economic and cultural topics. These authentic materials are either used in their original form or specially adapted for use in tests.

There are guidelines which regulate the following aspects of test design:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- item and task types.

These guidelines are complemented by samples and detailed marking scales.

1.2 Test item writing

Test items are written by individual members of the Board of Examiners. Item writers are always practising teachers. The president of the Board and the teacher acting as secretary to the Board check the test proposals, make modifications and select tasks and items to construct three versions of the test for each test battery.

1.3 Pretesting

There is no formal pretesting.

MARKING

2.1 Process

As the number of candidates is limited and as they do not normally live or work very far from the premises of the CLL, there is only one examination centre. All the members of the Board may be appointed as Examiners for oral and for written testing.

For the oral component of each examination, candidates are interviewed by two Examiners, neither of whom may have taught them. Scripts from all written tests are marked independently by two Examiners.

2.2 Training

Before each examination session Examiners have to undergo in-service training in order to ensure uniformity of standards of assessment. Two meetings are held: the first one is to deal with test criteria, item writing and marking. The second one is to deal

with the processes of test construction and the application of the marking scales.

2.3 Checking

Performance in the oral and written components of the test is assessed independently on detailed scales by each Examiner. At a later meeting a co-ordinator checks for borderline cases or cases where Examiners' marks differ widely. These cases are then discussed with the Examiners.

Results

For the ZLaF (Zertifikat Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch), 1 DLAF (Eischten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch) and the 2 DLAF (Zweten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch), candidates have the option of taking the whole examination or choosing the components which test the skill(s) they are interested in: oral communication, reading or writing. Candidates can also choose to take the test at a different level for each skill. Results and certification are given in the form of Pass or Fail for each skill and each level.

For the IDL (Iweschten Diplom Letzebuergesch) candidates have to attempt all components: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The results are given in the form of Pass or Fail. To be awarded this diploma the candidate has to be successful in all the four skills. However, a provisional certificate can be issued for those components which the candidate has passed, before he or she has taken all four.

Security

Every stage of the examination process is carefully controlled. The whole process, from the first proposals for test items to the final evaluation of candidates' performance, is strictly confidential. No test is ever re-used.

ZERTIFIKAT LETZEBUERGESCH ALS FRIEMSPROOCH (ZLAF)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Waystage specification.

There are three components:

READING

After reading a simple text of between sixty and 100 words in length, candidates must respond to multiple-choice items. In addition they must demonstrate orally that they have a global understanding of the purpose and the content of the text. They may be asked questions about relevant details.

Candidates have to demonstrate general understanding of a short note, a short, simple text or an advertisement, identifying the main points of the text or scanning for information in order to perform simple tasks related to it.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to write a short note or message. At this level spelling is not taken into consideration for purposes of evaluation, provided it does not seriously interfere with the intelligibility of the text.

LISTENING / SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. The test consists of three parts: oral interaction, listening comprehension and oral expression. They have a short conversation with one of the Examiners on everyday topics or personal experiences. As a comprehension test they have to identify the main points of a short everyday message, which is recorded. As a test of oral expression they have to describe a picture.

Candidates must be able to communicate at an elementary level. They have to exchange simple information in a limited number of predictable everyday situations and describe briefly an object, person or event.

Weighting of components

Each component is individually assessed and certificated. In the case of the Listening/Speaking component, interaction, comprehension and oral expression are each assessed, and are given equal weighting, at 33.3% of the total.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Each individual component is graded. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

EISCHTEN DIPLOM LETZEBUERGESCH ALS FRIEMSPROOCH (1DLAF)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification.

There are three components:

READING

After reading a simple 150-word text candidates are expected to respond to a set of multiple-choice items. In addition they must demonstrate orally that they have a global understanding of the purpose and the content of the text. They may be asked other, more detailed questions about the text.

Candidates have to show a global understanding of authentic texts: short news items, bulletins, advertisements, social and associative messages. They must be able to identify the main points and relevant details of a text or scan for information in order to perform the tasks related to the text.

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WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write short texts in simple language.

At this level spelling is not taken into consideration for purposes of evaluation, provided it does not seriously interfere with the intelligibility of the text.

LISTENING / SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by two Examiners. The test consists of three parts: oral interaction, listening comprehension and oral expression.

Candidates have a five-minute conversation with one of the Examiners on everyday topics, or on general or personal topics. As a comprehension test they must be able to identify the purpose and the main points of an everyday dialogue, an item of information or a story after hearing a recorded version. As a test of oral expression they must be able to describe and comment on a picture.

Candidates must show that they are capable of working in an environment requiring contact with speakers of Luxembourgish. They should be able to communicate accurately in everyday social situations, although they may have difficulty in dealing with unforeseen circumstances.

Weighting of components

Each component is individually assessed and certificated. In the case of the Listening/Speaking component, interaction, comprehension and oral expression are each assessed, and are given equal weighting, at 33.3% of the total.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Each individual component is graded. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

ZWETEN DIPLOM LETZEBUERGESCH ALS FRIEMSPROOCH (2DLAF)

This is an examination at ALTE Level Three.

There are three components:

READING

After reading a 200-word text, candidates answer a set of multiple-choice items. In addition they must demonstrate orally that they have a global understanding of the purpose and the content of the text. They are asked further detailed questions about the text.

Candidates have to be able to understand texts of a certain level of difficulty, drawn from social, professional or cultural life.

WRITING

There are three tasks: The first task requires the candidate to write a report of a discussion or a speech of about 15 minutes recorded on audio- or video tape (150–200 words). Taking notes is allowed. The second task is a summary of a 300–400 word text. Responses should be about 80 words in length. The third task requires the candidate to write or answer a personal or formal letter (200–300 words).

Candidates must be able to write fluently in everyday language, producing narrative passages and formally correct letters. They must be able to use relative clauses and link sentences accurately.

At this level, spelling is taken into consideration for purposes of evaluation. It should respect the basic rules of orthography, and any errors should not interfere with the intelligibility of the text.

LISTENING / SPEAKING

There are three tasks. The first task requires the candidate to write a report of a discussion or a speech of about 20 minutes recorded on audio- or video tape. The candidate is allowed to take notes, and responses should be about 500 words in length. The second task requires the candidate to write or answer a personal or formal letter. Contents are to be drawn from different texts (200–300 words).

Candidates must be able to write fluently in everyday language, producing narrative passages and formally correct letters. They must be able to use relative clauses and link sentences accurately.

At this level, spelling is taken into consideration for purposes of evaluation. It should respect the rules of orthography, and errors should not interfere with the intelligibility of the text.

Weighting of components

Each component is individually assessed and certificated. In the case of the Listening/Speaking component, interaction, comprehension and oral expression are each assessed, and are given equal weighting, at 33.3% of the total.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Each individual component is graded. Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

IEWESCHTEN DIPLOM LETZEBUERGESCH (IDL)

This is an examination in Luxembourgish at near-native-speaker level. Candidates must attempt all components and, except for Writing, are tested individually for all components.

There are four components:

READING

There is a 1000-word text taken from newspapers, official reports or contemporary literature. Candidates have to respond to a set of

multiple-choice items. In addition they must demonstrate orally that they have a global understanding of the purpose and the content of the text. They may be asked further detailed questions about the text.

Candidates must be able to understand the gist and the details of authentic general or literary texts.

WRITING

There are three tasks. The first task requires the candidate to write a report of a discussion or a speech of about 20 minutes recorded on audio- or video tape. The candidate is allowed to take notes, and responses should be about 500 words in length. The second task requires the candidate to write or answer a personal or formal letter. Contents are to be drawn from different texts (200–300 words). The third is a gap-filling task with 24 to 30 items where the candidate must prove his knowledge and control of the language system.

Candidates are expected to be able to write on all topics for which Luxembourgish is used as a written language.

They must be able to express themselves accurately and fluently in writing and to use correct spelling.

LISTENING

After hearing a 500-word recorded text twice, candidates are expected to give an oral report on its purpose and content. The text is then heard again, and the candidates have to give oral answers to a series of questions.

SPEAKING

Candidates have to express their opinion on a prepared subject chosen from a range of three themes. In addition to the separate assessments of listening and speaking, there is a conversation with an Examiner during which the candidate's ease in oral communication is tested. The theme may be suggested by the candidate. 50% of this component is a test of listening, and 50% a test of speaking.

As far as oral comprehension and expression are concerned, candidates must be able to show almost the same degree of accuracy and fluency as they would in their first language. They must show an ability to take part in discussions without any difficulty and communicate in any social, professional or cultural situations that may arise.

Weighting of components

Each of the four components is equally weighted and carries 25% of the total marks.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. These are awarded for each of the four components individually. Only candidates who pass each component are awarded the IDL diploma.

NEDERLANDS
Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal (CNaVT)

CNaVT, The Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal, is a government subsidised non-profit-making organisation of the Université Catholique de Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. It was founded in 1975 as a result of the collaboration between the Belgian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science, and it received a yearly grant from both these ministries. In 1985 the CNaVT came under the auspices of the Nederlandse Taalunie. This bi-governmental organisation was established in 1980 by a treaty between the Belgian and the Dutch governments. It aims to strengthen the international position of the Dutch language by creating an infrastructure for a joint language policy and by integrating the Netherlands and the Dutch-speaking ('Flemish') community in Belgium in all fields concerning the Dutch language. The main responsibilities of the CNaVT are to design and develop proficiency tests in Dutch as a Foreign Language and to conduct research so as to provide these tests with a scientific basis. All tests are composed centrally by the staff of the CNaVT at Louvain-la-Neuve, which also carries out the administrative organisation.

The CNaVT offers examinations at three levels of ability: elementary, intermediate and advanced.

The examinations presented in this document are (in order of increasing difficulty):

Examen Elementaire Kennis (EK)
Examen Basiskennis (BK)
Examen Uitgebreide Kennis (UK)

The certificates are of use to those looking for employment in different fields in the Netherlands and Belgium and to prospective students seeking admission to universities and other institutes of Higher Education in the Low Countries. Since 1996 the Committee of Ministers of the Nederlandse Taalunie has officially assigned equal value to the CNaVT Basiskennis and the CITO diploma Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I, and to the CNaVT Uitgebreide Kennis and the CITO diploma Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II.

The CNaVT examinations can be taken at more than 300 centres all over the world. Each examination consists of four separate subtests for reading, listening, writing and speaking. The writing tests also contain a component for the testing of 'structural competence' (grammar and vocabulary). A complete examination may be taken, or alternatively one or more of the four subtests. Administration takes place once a year in the first two weeks of May, when the question papers are sent to local examination centres. Centres receive subscription forms in January and candidates can register up to eight weeks before the examination date. It is the responsibility of the centres to make sure registrations reach the CNaVT by March 15. Results in the form of grades are sent to centres approximately eight to ten weeks after the examination. Certificates are issued two weeks later. They can be sent to the centre or directly to individual candidates.

For any further information regarding CNaVT examinations, please contact:

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EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Authentic materials are selected for Reading, Listening and partially for Writing (the c-test for EK and the cloze for UK) from a broad variety of sources including newspapers, magazines, brochures, advertisements, publicity material, collections of short stories, operating instructions and radio items such as interviews, news broadcasts, debates, announcements, informative programmes and speeches. About half of the materials are of northern origin (The Netherlands), while the other half comes from the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. The selection is carried out by the scientific unit of the CNaVT, which is also the Examination Board. Its members are practising teachers of Dutch as a Foreign Language and are involved in the teaching of Dutch language and linguistics as well as the training of teachers of DFL at the university of Louvain-la-Neuve. They also regularly give courses in Dutch Language and Culture organised by the Nederlandse Taalunie. In their choice of materials they are guided by the following criteria:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- reference to standard tools of Dutch;
- lexis and grammar;
- cultural considerations;
- item types.

1.2 Test item writing

The members of the CNaVT scientific unit are also the item writers and have a long experience in this field. New members are trained and closely monitored. The whole team keeps in touch with developments in test theory and practice. At the two lower levels (EK and BK), items are adapted in accordance with

the stipulated lexical and grammatical requirements. The highest level is not subject to restrictions in vocabulary and grammar, though some material may need some 'cleaning up'. All items are reviewed by every team member and several editing rounds take place. The resulting first version of the exams is then scrutinised by an external group of experts in relevant fields, the Werkgroep CNaVT, and – based on their comments – the team in Louvain-la-Neuve prepares the final version.

1.3 Pretesting

Pretesting the items has been ruled out at the moment because of the impossibility of finding a representative pretest population in sufficient numbers. As an alternative, link items are included in the actual examinations. This allows for calibration and, after marking, statistics can be obtained on the discrimination and reliability for each item. Thus pass standards can be set related to known levels of ability. For each session a new set of linking items is selected, based on the results of the statistics and included in the new examination. This procedure ensures that the same norm is maintained for examinations in successive sessions. Examination candidates, teachers and Examiners, and Raters are invited to provide feedback so as to get as much information as possible on the quality of the test items.

MARKING

2.1 Process

Objective components are marked mechanically (clerically and by computer) at the CNaVT. The open-ended tasks of the writing and speaking examinations are marked centrally by Raters in Louvain-la-Neuve. The responses of the oral part are recorded on audio tape by the local Examiner (usually a teacher of Dutch) and are marked by one Rater at Louvain-la-Neuve. The scripts in the written component are also marked by one Rater at the CNaVT. Raters are qualified teachers of Dutch, usually with some teaching experience in DFL. Detailed mark scales pertaining to a number of aspects of writing and speaking performance are used.

The marks for all examinations are scaled using IRT. Cut-off marks are determined by reference to fixed points on the ability scales.

2.2 Training

Raters undergo extensive training by CNaVT staff during six days. This familiarises them with the examinations and their underlying principles and gives them intensive practice using the mark scales on sample examinations of previous years. Those marking the same subtest are encouraged to confer with each other on difficult cases. The aim is to reduce differences in scoring behaviour. Raters mark all the oral and written exams in Louvain-la-Neuve and are continuously advised and monitored by the staff.

2.3 Checking

The CNaVT scientific staff regularly check random samples of marked examinations and give feedback to the Raters. From time to time Raters are asked to re-mark each other's work and any significant differences are discussed and marks adjusted if necessary. One staff member is assigned specific responsibility for the quality of writing task marking and another one for that of the oral component. Borderline cases, especially between Pass and Fail, but also between, for example, Good and Very Good are compared to similar cases of (the) previous year(s) that have already been marked.

Results

Results come in the form of grades, which each correspond to a band of scores. These grades are: Onvoldoende (Fail), Voldoende (Pass), Ruim Voldoende (Fair), Goed (Good), Zeer Goed (Excellent). Centres and candidates receive these grades within eight to ten weeks of taking an examination. Certificates are issued two weeks after that. For success in all four subtests at one of the three levels, a candidate receives a volledig certificaat (complete certificate), while success in less than all of these four separate components results in a deelcertificaat (partial certificate). On both partial and complete certificates a grade is mentioned for each of the components that was taken.

Security

At each stage of the examination procedure precautions are taken to ensure maximum security. The examinations are dispatched in sealed envelopes and can only be opened in front of the examinees at the moment of administration. Local Examiners are required to follow strict security procedures. All examination papers, even if unused, must be sent back to the central bureau at Louvain-la-Neuve.

EXAMEN ELEMENTAIRE KENNIS (EK)

This is an examination for candidates from an elementary up to a low intermediate level. It tests the language skills needed to survive in social and work situations in a Dutch-speaking environment. It requires competence in all the language skills. The candidate must demonstrate the ability to understand and express him/herself in simple spoken and written language, in a variety of general situations requiring exchange of information and personal opinions.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to read short factual texts on a variety of topics and understand both the general sense and non-trivial details. They must be able to scan factual material for information and read passages for gist. They must also show an understanding of the structure of the language. Furthermore, they must be able to understand the attitudes and intentions of the writer. Texts are based on authentic material such as newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, columns (short stories), (informal letters, etc. These are rewritten within the lexical and grammatical restrictions of the level.

There are five texts of different types, with 25 items of a multiple-choice task type (comprehension questions with three options) to be completed in 65 minutes.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to compose short, simple documents to convey information, report events, describe situations, give advice and express personal opinions on a variety of topics from everyday life, taking into account the audience and purpose specified in the instructions.

There are two tasks. The first is a c-test and requires the candidate to fill in the second half of every second word of a short informative text. There are forty blanks in total. This section carries one-third of the total mark for Writing at this level. The time available is 20 minutes. This task type tests structural competence (grammar and vocabulary), which is seen as a subskill of Writing. As a second task the candidate has to write a personal letter of approximately 125 to 150 words in length. He/she has the choice between two informal letters with five written prompts each. The task includes a clear statement of the purpose and the audience. It is to be completed within 45 minutes and carries two-thirds of the total mark for Writing at this level.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand both the general sense and non-trivial details of texts on a variety of topics of general interest. They must also be able to extract specific information from these texts and show an appreciation of the attitudes and feelings of the speaker(s). Listening texts are usually based on authentic (radio) material and include dialogues, monologues, announcements, advertisements, etc. These texts are rewritten within the lexical and grammatical restrictions of the level and especially recorded for the purpose of this examination.

The candidate hears three texts of different types divided into 25 passages, each with one completion item of the multiple-choice task type. He/she has to choose, from three options, the correct ending to the sentences that are interrupted on the tape. The speed is slightly slower than that of normal spoken language. This component lasts from 30 to 40 minutes.

SPEAKING

The candidate must be able to communicate within a variety of more or less predictable settings. He/she can ask for and give information in practical everyday situations and can express some personal opinions.

The speaking component lasts about 10 minutes and consists of two parts, which each carry 50% of the total mark of the speaking examination at this level. The task in part one is to answer 13 informal open-ended questions asking for information, opinions and reactions to specific situations. In part two, a (narrative) description of situations and events is required, referring to visual prompts. In this part the candidate has the choice between two sets of eight drawings each.

Weighting of components

Since no overall mark per level is given, the four subtests are not weighted. The certificates give a separate grade for Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

Results

A grade is given evaluating performance in each of the four subtests. A complete certificate Elementaire Kennis is awarded to candidates passing all four components. Those passing one, two or three components receive a partial certificate Elementaire Kennis.

EXAMEN BASISKENNIS (BK)

This is an examination at an intermediate level. It tests the language skills needed to interact without significant problems in social and work situations in a Dutch-speaking environment. It requires competence in all language skills. The candidate must demonstrate the ability to understand and express him/herself in spoken and written language with at least basic formal accuracy and to use the language appropriately in a wide range of both general and more specific situations which may require complexities of expression.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to deal with a large variety of texts such as they may encounter in real life. They must show understanding of the gist and main points as well as any points of specific detail. Candidates are also specifically tested on lexical and grammatical knowledge as specified for this intermediate level. They must be able to skim and scan the text, establish the main line of argument, and define key points. Their reading skills also include distinguishing opinions from factual information, recognizing the author's point of view and the tone and purpose of the text. They must be able to combine these skills to obtain information from texts.

Texts are based on authentic material such as newspaper and magazine articles, formal letters, reviews, reports, etc. These materials are rewritten within the lexical and grammatical restrictions of the level.

There are usually four texts with approximately 25 items in total of a multiple-choice task type (comprehension questions with four options) to be completed in about 80 minutes.

WRITING

Candidates must be able to write texts of a descriptive/informative and narrative nature on a variety of topics of general interest related to personal and everyday experiences or to general social aspects with reasonable clarity of content and with a formal accuracy that is appropriate for the level. They are expected to

take into account the audience and purpose as defined by the instructions.

There are two tasks. The first is a multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary test, consisting of ten items with four options. This section carries one-third of the total mark for Writing at this level and is to be completed within 10 minutes. This task type tests structural competence, which is seen as an important subskill of Writing. In the second section the task is to write a formal letter of about 150 to 180 words. The candidate has to choose between two formal letters, each guided by three written prompts. The task instructions give a clear specification of audience and purpose. This second task is to be performed in 45 minutes and carries two-thirds of the total mark for Writing at this level.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to demonstrate an ability to understand a variety of texts on a wide range of topics. They must be able to understand both the gist of a text and the text as a whole, as well as distinguish specific details and pick out specific information and ideas, identifying true and false information, follow a line of argument and distinguish main points from secondary ones. Candidates must also be able to interpret the attitude of the speaker(s). They must be able to combine some of these skills in order to obtain information from listening texts. The texts are based on authentic radio material and include interviews (sometimes with more than two speakers), dialogues, documentaries, short stories, announcements, news broadcasts, speeches, etc. They are rewritten within the lexical and grammatical restrictions of the level and especially recorded for the purpose of this examination.

The listening examination at this level presents candidates with two task types. A first section consists of a partial dictation and requires gap-filling: candidates hear a recording of ten news items, but in the transcribed text up to five words are missing in each item which need to be filled in. This section carries one-third of the weight of the total mark of the Listening examination at this level. It lasts about 10 minutes. In the second part candidates hear two listening texts of different types divided into 15 passages, each with one multiple-choice comprehension question with three options. This multiple-choice component carries two-thirds of the total mark of the Listening examination at this level. It takes about 40 minutes.

SPEAKING

The candidate must be able to communicate effectively in a variety of everyday life settings. Errors must not interfere with intelligibility. He/she should participate in conversations about general topics and express personal ideas and opinions in a coherent and structured way. Other skills required are: to be able to engage in extended conversations about one's own life and talk fluently and with reasonable formal accuracy about one's particular interests and fields of competence.

The speaking component at the intermediate level lasts approximately 10 minutes. It has two parts that each carry 50% of the total mark of this speaking examination. The task in the first part is to answer nine conversational type open-ended questions asking for information, opinions, ideas and reactions to specific, often problematic, situations. In part two, a (narrative) description of situations and events is required, referring to visual prompts (a set of nine drawings) adapted to evoke responses of a complexity that is appropriate for the level.

Weighting of components

Since no overall mark per level is given, the four subtests are not weighted. Certificates give separate grades for Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

Results

A grade is given evaluating performance in each of the four subtests. A complete certificate Basiskennis is awarded to candidates passing all four components. Those passing three, two or one component receive a partial certificate Basiskennis.

EXAMEN UITGEBREIDE KENNIS (UK)

This is an examination at an advanced level for people wishing to use the language in a Dutch-speaking environment for the purpose of higher education or in professional situations that require linguistic flexibility and a fairly high degree of precision in language performance. It requires competence in all the language skills. The candidate must demonstrate the ability to understand and express him/herself in spoken and written language with a high degree of formal accuracy, to use complex expressions, and to control linguistic operations within the range of his/her own personal and professional experience as well as to respond appropriately in unfamiliar situations.

A complete certificate Uitgebreide Kennis qualifies successful candidates for entrance to various forms of higher education and the professions in Belgium and the Netherlands.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to understand all sorts of authentic texts related to areas of both more general as well as semi-specialist interest. These include (long) newspaper articles or texts from magazines and journals, covering touristic, broad cultural, general artistic, popular scientific or semi-academic subjects and the like. Texts can also be complex stories; popularised reports on socio-psychological, general economical and medical research, etc. Candidates should demonstrate a variety of reading skills such as understanding both gist and specific detail; skimming, scanning, distinguishing opinions from factual information and deduction of meaning from context. They are also expected to be aware of tone and register of the text, to identify the purpose of different text types and to make inferences from texts and documents. All texts are authentic and written for the general reader. At this level there are no lexical or grammatical limitations to what candidates are expected to understand.

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The test consists of two or three texts of different types, with a total of 25 items of multiple-choice task type (comprehension questions with four options) to be answered within a time span of 70 minutes.

WRITING

Candidates should be able to write a variety of text types such as personal and formal letters; descriptive, informative, narrative, discursive and persuasive documents. They should perform these tasks with a high degree of accuracy so that any error does not (seriously) disturb the native speaker. They should write on a wide range of topics relevant to everyday life and needs and to their own personal and professional fields.

There are two tasks. The first is a rational cloze with 40 gap-filling items. The text is an authentic informative or narrative text. This subcomponent carries one-third of the total mark for Writing at this level. There is a time limit of 20 minutes. With this task type the structural competence of the candidate can be tested at a high level. Structural competence is considered an important subskill of language proficiency in general and of Writing in particular. In the second section the task is an open-ended writing assignment about a given topic. The candidate's task is to compose a coherent discursive text on this topic, which is usually controversial. It needs to be about 250 words in length. This task is to be performed within 70 minutes and carries two-thirds of the total mark for Writing at this level.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand authentic listening texts of various types and on a range of topics which may be unfamiliar. There are sometimes more than two speakers and the speed is that of normal native speech. Candidates must be able to understand both specific details and the texts as a whole should make inferences regarding the context. Awareness of the organizational structure is also expected, as well as an appreciation of the attitude of the speaker(s). Texts are recordings of authentic radio broadcasts: interviews, radio news, advertising, documentaries, etc. There is no rewriting since at this level there are no lexical or grammatical limitations to what candidates are expected to understand.

The candidate hears two or three texts of different types divided into 25 passages, each with one multiple-choice comprehension question with three options. This listening test takes about 60 minutes.

SPEAKING

The candidate must demonstrate the ability to interact effectively in a variety of everyday life settings. He/she can participate in a conversation or debate even on unfamiliar topics. Ideas within the range of one's own personal and professional experience should be expressed with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary. This should be done in a logical and structured way. Other skills required are: the ability to describe, narrate, make proposals, hypothesise, support opinions and provide detailed explanation.

The speaking component at the advanced level lasts approximately 10 minutes. It consists of two parts, which each carry 50% of the total mark of the Speaking examination. The task in part one is to answer six conversational open-ended questions, involving the candidate's personal opinions and experiences, and including a number of given hypothetical situations to which the candidates are asked to react. Part two is an open-ended speaking assignment about a topic of general relevance. The candidate has a choice between two topics, each of which comes with five or six written prompts. This task allows for both narrative and discursive elements and tries to provoke a response of a complexity that is appropriate to the level.

Weighting of components

Since no overall mark per level is given, the four subtests are not weighted. Certificates give separate grades for Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

Results

A grade is given evaluating a candidate's performance in each of the four subtests. A complete certificate Uitgebreide Kennis is awarded to candidates passing all four components. Those passing three, two or one component receive a partial certificate Uitgebreide Kennis.

NEDERLANDS
CITO, Instituut voor Toetsontwikkeling

CITO, the Instituut voor Toetsontwikkeling, is the National Institute for Educational Measurement, a non-profit-making educational institution. It was founded in 1968 by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science. One of the main responsibilities of the Institute is the design and development of achievement and proficiency tests. It is also in charge of the implementation of programme assessment and evaluation at local and national levels and the advancement of both applied and theoretical research. This is in addition to providing a wide range of services to educational and research organisations.

At the request of the Dutch Education Secretary, CITO has developed, in collaboration with ICE, the Bureau for Intercultural Evaluation, two examinations in Dutch as a Second Language. The first qualifies successful candidates to undergo training and take up an occupation in the Netherlands. The other examination is a qualification for entry to higher education and the professions.

The examinations presented in this document are:

Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-I) (training/occupations)

Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II (NT2-II) (higher education/professions)

For further information regarding these examinations, please write to the address below:

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Cito

EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Selection and (where necessary) recording of all materials is done by teams of professional test constructors at CITO (the Dutch National Institute for Educational Measurement) and ICE (the Bureau for Intercultural Evaluation). Materials are taken from a wide range of sources, including books, newspapers and magazines, brochures, advertisements, diagrams, manuals, operating instructions, notices, forms, labels, interviews, discussions, conversations, dialogues, speeches, public announcements, radio programmes, telephone messages, directions, talks and lectures.

1.2 Test item writing

The CITO team produces the tests for Listening and Speaking, the ICE team those for Reading and Writing. Items are subject to revision on the basis of comments from team members and other staff, as well as from an advisory board of practising teachers. The final version of each examination has to be approved by the State Examinations Committee especially set up for this purpose by the Minister of Education and Science.

1.3 Pretesting

All items are pretested. The selection and calibration of items is based on Item Response Theory, using a member of the family of one-parameter Rasch models. Using this design, it is possible even before tests are administered, to set pass standards which are related to known levels of ability.

MARKING

2.1 Process

Scripts produced by candidates in the writing component and full recordings of the oral test responses are marked by two (and, if necessary, three) Raters, all of whom are practising teachers of Dutch as a second language who have obtained certificates which qualify them to act as Raters of state examinations. In the process an extensive mark scheme is used, covering a number of aspects of language performance.

The majority of items in the reading and listening components can be marked either by computer or clerically.

The marks for all examinations are scaled using IRT. Cut-off marks are determined by reference to fixed points on the ability scales.

2.2 Training

Raters attend a three-day training course which familiarises them with the principles underlying the examinations, and offers extensive opportunities to practise using mark schemes. Before they can be employed as Raters they have to pass an examination and obtain an official Rater's certificate.

2.3 Checking

A special method of linking Raters makes it possible to spot and remedy deviations. Raters lose their certificated status if a significant number of their scores deviates beyond a predetermined level of acceptance from scores given by the other Raters with whom they are paired.

Results

Raw scores are transformed into marks on a fixed-interval scale running theoretically from 100-900, on which 500 is the pass mark. Candidates are informed of their marks on this scale within four weeks of taking an examination.

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Security

Every stage of the examination procedure, from construction to the actual administration, is carefully controlled to ensure maximum security.

STAATSEXAMEN NEDERLANDS ALS TWEEDE TAAL, EXAMEN I (NT2-I)

This is an examination for candidates up to intermediate level, and was first set by the Ministry of Education in 1992. It qualifies successful candidates for entrance to various forms of education and training as well as commerce and industry.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to deal with a large variety of texts such as they may encounter in real life. They must be able to skim and scan the text, establish the main line of argument, define key points, etc. Texts are taken from a wide range of work-related material including manuals, notices, advertisements, forms, and magazine and newspaper articles.

There are two sections. The first has about eleven texts with approximately eighteen items which must be completed within a limited time span. The second has about ten texts with approximately thirty-one items, to be completed without particular time constraint. All the items are of the following task types: multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to demonstrate various writing skills. There are eight tasks. The first four require the candidate to complete sentences, short texts, letters and forms and to construct a short written paragraph from a number of given sentences. The remaining four tasks require the candidate to produce a short letter and a piece of descriptive writing.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand a variety of texts. They are expected to understand the gist of a text, pick out specific information, follow a line of argument and distinguish main points from secondary ones. Texts are taken from a wide range of sources including public announcements, conversations, speeches, interviews, advertisements, radio broadcasts and lectures.

There are three sections. The first has a number of interviews on which approximately twenty items are based. The second has approximately thirteen recorded passages on tape (commercials, instructions and directions) with one item for each passage. The third has approximately thirteen recorded passages (news items and public announcements) with one item for each passage. The following task types are used: multiple-choice, open-ended questions, gap-filling.

SPEAKING

Candidates are expected to perform twenty tasks in a variety of settings. The first twelve require short responses, ranging from one or two words to one or two sentences. The remaining eight tasks require somewhat longer responses. Candidates need to refer to pictures and short texts in carrying out the tasks.

Results

The tests for the different skills are equated using a Rasch calibrated item bank. Marks for the tests are then put on to an interval scale. There is a pass mark for each of the four tests and a separate certificate is awarded to successful candidates for each test. Candidates who gain all four certificates are entitled to the 'Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal I' diploma.

STAATSEXAMEN NEDERLANDS ALS TWEEDE TAAL, EXAMEN II (NT2-II)

This is an examination for candidates at an intermediate level and was first set by the Ministry of Education in 1992. It qualifies successful candidates for entrance to various forms of higher education and the professions. Compared with NT2-I, there is a greater theoretical emphasis, a wider range of vocabulary and a higher level of abstraction.

There are four components:

READING

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to deal with a large variety of text types which they may encounter in real life. They must be able to skim and scan the text, establish the main line of argument, define key points, etc. Texts are taken from a wide range of work-related material including manuals, notices, advertisements, forms, and magazine and newspaper articles.

There are two sections. The first has about six texts with approximately seventeen items which must be completed within a limited time span. The second has about nine texts with approximately thirty-three items. All the items are of the following task types: multiple-choice, open-ended questions.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to demonstrate various writing subskills as well as complete a variety of short writing tasks. They are also expected to write an essay.

There are eight tasks in three categories. The first requires candidates to complete short texts and to construct short texts from given sentences. In the second they must write statements, short letters, describe an activity, process or situation and produce explanatory comments. The third involves writing an essay.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand a variety of texts. They are expected to understand the gist of a text, retrieve specific information, follow a line of argument and distinguish main points from secondary ones. Texts are taken from a wide range of sources including interviews, conversations, speeches, public announcements, advertisements, radio broadcasts and lectures.

There are three sections. The first has a number of interviews on which approximately fourteen items are based. The second is a recorded lecture consisting of approximately thirteen reading passages on tape, with one item for each passage. The third has approximately thirteen recorded passages (advertisements, news items and public announcements), with one item for each passage. These items are of the following task types: multiple-choice, open-ended questions, gap-filling.

SPEAKING

Candidates are expected to perform a number of different tasks in a variety of settings. There are three sections. The six tasks in Section One require responses of one or two words. Section Two has seven tasks requiring responses of at least two sentences. The tasks in Section Three require candidates to produce a monologue expressing their views on a given subject. For all the tasks the candidates refer to information supplied by means of pictures or short texts.

Results

The tests for the different skills are equated using a Rasch calibrated item bank. Marks for the tests are then put on to an interval scale. There is a pass mark for each of the four tests and a separate certificate is awarded to successful candidates for each test. Candidates who gain all four certificates are entitled to the 'Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal II' diploma.

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NORSK
Universitetet i Bergen

Norsk språktest has a non-profit-making status. It is based on an agreement and a collaboration between Universitetet i Bergen and Folkeuniversitetet and is divided into two sections. The professional one is located at Universitetet i Bergen while the economic–administrative one is located at Folkeuniversitetet in Oslo.

Norsk språktest was established in 1988 in order to set the standards of proficiency in Norwegian as a second language for candidates from abroad who applied for admission to Norwegian universities. In 1990 the project for developing a test at an intermediate level started, funded by the Ministry of Churches, Education and Research. Since 1991 Norsk språktest has been responsible for the production of examinations and for their continual development, to meet the needs of the candidates, the teaching institutions and those of Norwegian society.

Norsk språktest offers two official examinations testing a range of communicative abilities.

The examinations presented in this document are:

- Språkprøven i norsk for fremmedspråklige voksne (The Examination in Norwegian for Adults – Intermediate level). Two versions: Norwegian bokmål, Neo-Norwegian.
- Test i norsk for fremmedspråklige – høyere nivå (Test of Norwegian for Foreigners – Advanced level).

The advanced level examination can be taken in 10 university and language centres in Norway. It can also be arranged abroad at embassies and universities on special request. There are six fixed dates a year, three for the written examination and three for the oral one.

The intermediate level examinations can be taken at more than 50 different centres in Norway. There is close collaboration between Norsk språktest and the local councils of education, and the examinations are organised three times a year. Registration of the candidates is the responsibility of Folkeuniversitetet. Candidates must register six weeks before the examination. Results are issued directly to candidates for both examinations.

Norsk språktest also produces diagnostic tests at elementary level and sample tests.

For further information about Norsk språktest, please write to:

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SPRÅKPRØVEN I NORSK FOR FREMMEDSPRÅKLIGE VOKSNE

This is an examination at an intermediate level requiring competence in all the language skills. It was developed at the request of the Ministry of Churches, Education and Research in order to set standards of language competence for the teaching of Norwegian as a Foreign Language.

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read texts of various kinds (informative and of general interest) and to show understanding of the gist as well as of some points of specific detail. The candidates are tested mainly on lexical knowledge.

There are two sections. The first section tests comprehension of gist at paragraph level, as well as of lexical knowledge through multiple-choice tasks in running text. The second section tests comprehension of gist, main points or detailed content of two to four smaller texts taken from newspapers, publications or announcements. The test consists of three or more open-ended questions accompanying each text.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write non-specialised texts of a descriptive and narrative nature. They must choose one topic from a range of three topics from family and society life. Some guidelines are given. Responses should be approximately 250 words in length.

LISTENING – CONVERSATIONS

Candidates are expected to be able to understand conversations, dialogues, and information from family, workplace and daily life situations, at an intermediate level. There are two sections, each lasting approximately three to four minutes. The first section consists of a conversational and informative text, the second covers from ten to fifteen minor dialogues. There are from 10 to 15 multiple-choice questions to each text.

LISTENING – DICTATION

The dictation is based on an authentic text at an intermediate level, read aloud three times, the second reading with pauses for the candidate to fill in the gaps. The gaps cover a meaningful group of words.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They must be able to respond to questions and to interact in Norwegian at an intermediate level. Prompt materials are used by the Assessors to stimulate and guide the interaction.

There are four tasks related to different language functions. The first task involves description of a situation presented on a photograph, and in the second the candidate is asked to explain situations and details in photographs and talk about his/her own experiences. In the third section the candidate is supposed to give his/her own interpretation of a given topic and to continue the conversation which is then guided by the Assessor. Prompts are given by the Assessor as guidelines for the interaction.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their control of the language system and the lexis by doing gap-filling tasks in an authentic text at an intermediate level.

Weighting of components

Each of the following components: Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking carries equal weight. Structural competence is included in Writing.

Results

Certificates are awarded to all candidates. The results are given by points on a scale going from 50 points as a minimum and 300 points as a maximum. The Ministry has not yet decided which level should be regarded as the lowest pass grade for Språkprøven.

TEST I NORSK FOR FREMMEDSPRÅKLIGE - HØYERE NIVÅ

This is an examination at an advanced level, which tests proficiency in all the language skills, as well as knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. It is recognised by all the higher educational establishments in Norway, by oil companies and other companies which demand a certification of the level of proficiency in Norwegian as a second or foreign language.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to read three or more different authentic texts of various types. Texts are taken from newspapers, magazines and popularised scientific articles. There are twenty multiple-choice tasks to each text. The tasks are placed in the running text and the candidate is asked to choose the word or expression which corresponds to the meaning of a given sentence or paragraph.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to write a composition of a narrative and discursive nature. They can choose one of three given topics. Responses should be approximately 350 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates must be able to understand short conversations, to which they may listen only once, taken from situations in daily life and covering different functions and registers. Persons of different sex and age talk to each other in a natural way and at normal speed. There are forty multiple-choice tasks testing the candidates' comprehension of a reply, an idiom or a given intonation.

SUMMARY OF A SPOKEN TEXT

The candidates are expected to combine their listening comprehension and their writing competence in writing a summary (approximately 200 words) of a professional interview, discussion or presentation. They are allowed to listen to the spoken text twice and to take notes. The summary should be based on the key words or sentences which they have in front of them while listening.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually. They must be able to communicate fluently using narrative, explanatory and discursive language. They might hesitate on abstract or specialised subjects and make some non-communicative mistakes, but must be able to use rich vocabulary and to understand and make use of idioms.

There are four sections. In the first two sections the candidates must be able to respond spontaneously to spoken stimuli and to read aloud an informative text or an announcement at an advanced level. In the third section the candidate must explain situations and enter into discussions based on visual stimuli. Finally, the candidate must participate in a conversation on a subject chosen from a range of topics, based on short extracts from newspaper articles.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and control of grammar and lexis at an advanced level. There are forty items based on gapped sentences which test the candidate's competence as to applied grammatical knowledge, synonyms antonyms and idioms.

Weighting of components

The reading and listening comprehensions carry approximately one-third of the total marks, while Structural Competence, Summary and Writing between them carry two-thirds of the weighting. The oral competence is rated separately.

Results

Certificates are awarded to all the candidates in points on a scale ranging from 150 points minimum to 720 maximum. Acceptable levels are decided upon by the educational institutions. The levels demanded differ from one faculty to another, but are normally from 450 to 500 points.

PORTUGUÊS
Universidade de Lisboa (UL) (Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa) (DLCP)

The Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa (DLCP) is the Department of the University of Lisbon where Portuguese as a Foreign and Second Language is taught. In addition to Portuguese language courses, the Department also provides courses in literature, history, art and geography for non-native speakers. The Department organises a postgraduate course and teacher training courses and is involved in the publishing of books and teaching materials. It also co-ordinates research in the field of teaching and testing Portuguese as a Foreign and Second Language.

The examinations offered by the Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa at present are:

Certificado de Língua Portuguesa (CELP)
Diploma de Língua Portuguesa (DILP)

The following examinations are being developed, and will be available in the near future:

Certificado de Português Elementar (CEPE)
Certificado de Português Intermédio (CEPI)
Diploma Superior de Português (DISP)

A network of centres is still being set up with national and international institutions. For the time being, registration of candidates is the responsibility of the University of Lisbon. Candidates must register eight weeks before examinations. Results are issued to candidates approximately eight weeks after examinations, which can be taken in December, February (Portugal only) and June.

Further information is available from the address below:

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UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS

EXAMINATION SYSTEM

A new examination system is due to start in the near future and the examinations are being trialled at the moment. The description given below is what is foreseen for the future and takes into account the work completed so far.

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

Item writers/teachers are asked to select materials from a wide range of sources, according to the examination specifications and the components of the examinations. The material is vetted by the Head of Examinations and finally presented to the Examinations Committee.

1.2 Test item writers

Item writers are usually practising teachers and/or coursebook writers. It is expected that a course on item writing, pretesting and evaluation will be organised so that standards can be raised.

1.3 Pretesting

Pretesting has been held so far in Portugal, with students from various institutions. Between 150 and 200 students are involved in this process. Results are analysed and items for the examinations are selected.

MARKING

2.1 Process

The Head of Examinations co-ordinates marking. The examinations are marked by practising teachers, but computerised marking is now being introduced.

Oral components are assessed by two Examiners.

2.2 Training

Teachers discuss the marks awarded, and double marking is done where necessary. For the oral components of examinations, interviews will be recorded for a trial period. It is expected that a training course will take place to improve the marking of examinations.

2.3 Checking

At this stage no information can be provided on checking.

Results

Results, in the form of marks and grades, are sent to candidates from the University of Lisbon. As the examination system is changing, no further information can be given at this stage.

Security

A security system is currently being devised.

NB: In 1996-1997, the Evaluation Unit will become a more independent body, and will be directly responsible to the University of Lisbon in relation to professional aspects of testing and to the Camões Institute for administrative aspects.

CERTIFICADO DE LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA (CELP)

This is an examination based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification. It tests the language skills needed to participate in everyday situations. It is recognised by both Portuguese and foreign authorities.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand factual texts, public notices and signs. They must be able to understand the gist as well as specific details. Texts are taken from newspaper or magazine articles.

There are usually five questions with five to ten items of the following task types: multiple-choice, true/false, matching.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to write non-specialised texts expressing opinions and giving information related to personal details and experiences. Guidelines may be provided.

Candidates must complete two tasks: filling in a form and writing a letter, postcard or report.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand short texts (recorded announcements, news items and conversations). They must be able to understand the gist as well as specific details.

There are three texts, lasting approximately thirty minutes, followed by items of the following task types: gap-filling, true/false, multiple-choice.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by one or two Examiners. They must be able to interact on subjects of general interest and respond to everyday situations. They are also expected to be able to give the general meaning of a text.

Candidates are given a short text to read before the interview. They must then tell the Examiners the gist of the text before participating in an interview based on situations which occur in everyday life.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and control of the language system by completing texts and transforming sentences.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted and carries 22% of the total marks, except for Structural Competence, which carries 12%.

Results

There are three pass grades: Muito Bom (Very Good), Bom (Good) and Suficiente (Pass). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

DIPLOMA DE LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA (DILP)

This is an examination at an advanced level, that is suitable for people who are required to study or work in a Portuguese-speaking environment. It is recognised as an entrance requirement for Portuguese universities.

There are five components:

READING

Candidates are expected to be able to read and understand texts related to areas of general and specialist interest. They must be able to demonstrate a variety of reading skills and to understand what is expressed both explicitly and implicitly in the text. Texts may be taken from newspapers, magazines or books.

There are three texts with approximately thirty items of the following task types: multiple-choice, matching, gap-filling.

WRITING

Candidates are expected to be able to produce several types of coherent and cohesive texts. This involves completing non-specialist writing tasks in response to stimuli provided, expanding, paraphrasing and/or summarizing a text.

There is a range of three tasks from which the candidate must choose one. Responses should be between about 250 and 300 words in length.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to be able to understand each text as a whole, as well as understanding specific details and making inferences about context. They should be able to demonstrate sensitivity to social and cultural features of the text. Texts are taken from announcements, speeches, radio broadcasts, etc.

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There are three texts of varied types, lasting about forty minutes in all, with approximately thirty items of the following task types: information transfer, matching, note-completion.

SPEAKING

Candidates are tested individually by one or two Examiners. They are expected to demonstrate a range of oral skills: interactional, social, transactional, negotiation and collaboration.

Candidates begin by introducing themselves and responding to questions about themselves. They are then expected to react to a written or visual prompt. Finally, they have to participate actively in a conversation on a topic agreed beforehand.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge of the language system. They have to complete tasks of the following types, based on authentic texts: gap-filling, text completion or expansion, transformations. There are approximately fifty items.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted and carries 22% of the total marks, except for Structural Competence, which carries 12%.

Results

There are three pass grades: Muito Bom (Very Good), Bom (Good) and Suficiente (Pass). Certificates are awarded to all successful candidates.

SUOMI
Jyväskylän yliopisto

Yleiset kielitutkinnot – The National Certificates of Language Proficiency – is an examination system for adults, which consists of tests in several languages, including Finnish. The tasks measure language skills in practical situations where an adult could be required to use the language.

Started in 1992, but drawing on quite extensive prior experience in language testing, the development of the National Certificate is a joint non-profit project developed in collaboration between the National Board of Education and the University of Jyväskylä. Language proficiency is assessed on a nine-level scale from the elementary stages up to near-native speaker level. The system includes three different test levels:

Perustaso (Basic Level)
Keskitaso (Intermediate Level)
Ylin taso (Advanced Level)

The test system became operational in November 1994.

The test in Finnish as a Second Language derives from Suomen kielen tasokoe. This test was developed in response to the need to assess the Finnish skills of an increasing number of immigrants and refugees. When the National Certificate was developed, it was natural to include the Suomen kielen tasokoe as part of it. The examinations can currently be taken in approximately 100 test centres around Finland or in some centres abroad, and they are available twice a year (April and November). The tests are administered from the Centre of Applied Language Studies, at the University of Jyväskylä.

For further information, please contact:

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EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1. Selection of materials

Item writers are commissioned to select materials from a variety of sources including magazines, newspapers, brochures, advertisements and radio programmes. Guidelines for the selection of materials are related to the following:

- skills to be assessed;
- linguistic complexity;
- subject matter;
- cultural considerations;
- item types.

1.2. Test item writing

Usually the same item writers who choose the materials also produce the items. Item writers are practising language teachers or applied linguists. The Centre for Applied Language Studies (CALS) is responsible for training the item writers and for producing and updating the written instructions which guide both item writing and materials selection. Typically, the item review process takes two or three rounds (review of items by CALS followed by revisions by item writers).

1.3. Pretesting

Only some of the new items can be pretested at present. However, a part of each test consists of previously used and analysed items. Also, regular feedback on the appropriacy of new items is gathered from the Markers. Item banks based on IRT analyses will be created in the near future for item selection purposes.

MARKING

2.1. Process

Scripts and recordings produced by candidates are sent to CALS, from where they are distributed to trained Raters to be marked at home. Markers must have a university degree in the language, and are usually language teachers. Marking is guided by a fairly detailed marking scheme and by sets of benchmark examples in the productive skills.

Markers also have a standardisation meeting before starting their individual work.

2.2. Training

Markers are trained in seminars which are led by staff members of CALS and experienced item writers and Markers. During these seminars marking schemes, criteria and sample scripts are discussed. Training sessions on marking speaking and writing also

include going through sample performances at different grade levels and discussions of these samples.

2.3. Checking

About 25% of the subjectively marked components are double marked at the basic and intermediate level, and if a Marker deviates too much from the standard, all his or her scripts are double marked. In the advanced level tests, everything except the objectively marked section is double marked.

Results

Results are given in the form of an overall grade and profile grades in speaking, listening, reading, writing and vocabulary and grammar on an eight-point scale. Possible grades in the basic level tests are 1, 2 and 3. In the intermediate level tests the grades range from 1 to 5, and in the advanced level test from 5 to 8. A candidate who fails to reach grade 1 in the basic or intermediate tests is not given a grade; at the advanced level, candidates who do not reach grade 5 are given a grade described as 'below 5'. The results and certificates are issued after two months.

Security

Examination dates are carefully controlled and each examination centre has a person responsible for the security of the papers. Printing and storage of the examination materials takes place centrally at the University of Jyväskylä.

SUOMEN KIELI PERUSTASO

Perustaso, the basic level test, is aimed at skill levels 1–3 (on the National Certificate's 9-level scale). This test is most suitable for adults who are in the early stages of language learning. Basic level skills can also constitute an ultimate target level for candidates who only need the language for routine everyday purposes.

The National Certificate perustaso test consists of five subtests:

1. Reading comprehension (approx. 50 minutes)

2. Writing (approx. 50 minutes)

3. Structures and vocabulary (approx. 50 minutes)

4. Listening comprehension (approx. 25 minutes)

5. Speaking (approx. 20 minutes).

The total test time is about three hours.

READING

Candidates are expected to understand the gist of brief newspaper articles, advertisements or other similar short authentic texts related to the topic areas mentioned in the test specifications. There are usually three or four separate tasks; one task may include several short texts.

The questions concentrate on the comprehension of the main points and some important details. Several task types are used on each testing occasion (constructed response and selected response).

WRITING

Candidates are expected to write informal letters or messages. Topics vary; a task could be (for example) to write a note informing your family or a colleague about some matter. The main requirement for a successful accomplishment of the task is to convey the message to the reader as comprehensibly as possible.

There are two or three tasks, each of which relatively short and simulates tasks the candidates may encounter in real-life situations.

STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY

The candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of basic Finnish structures and vocabulary. The tasks are mainly contextualised, but when appropriate, decontextualised task-types may also be used.

This subtest contains four to six tasks, including multiple-choice, gap-filling and elaboration.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand the gist or some of the most important details of short dialogues or, for example, radio programmes/ announcements spoken at normal speed or at a slightly slower pace.

The test takes place in a language laboratory, and there are usually three or four tasks. Several task types, both constructed response and selected response, are used.

SPEAKING

Candidates are expected to express themselves orally as naturally and effectively as possible in situations that simulate real-life functions at a very basic level.

This subtest is conducted either face to face or in a language laboratory. There are usually three separate tasks that aim at testing different kinds of oral skills (e.g. reactions to situations, extended speech).

Weighting of components

An overall grade is given on the basis of the grades obtained from each subtest. The overall mark is usually the mode of the subtest level marks.

Results

Results are given using skill levels 1–3. 'Below 1' is awarded if the candidate has not been able meet the criteria set for level 1.

SUOMEN KIELI KESKITASO

Keskitaso, the intermediate level test, is best suited for skill levels 3–5 (on the 9-level scale), though grades 1–2 can also be awarded. This is the test for adults who occasionally use the language they are learning both in everyday and in work situations but cannot yet take an active presenter's, negotiator's or expert's role in the foreign language. Their knowledge of the language and their skill in using it is already fairly good.

The National Certificate keskitaso test consists of five subtests:

1. Reading comprehension (approx. 50 minutes)
2. Writing (approx. 50 minutes)
3. Structures and vocabulary (approx. 50 minutes)
4. Listening comprehension (approx. 30 minutes)
5. Speaking (approx. 20 minutes).

The testing time is about 3 hours 30 minutes in all.

READING

Candidates are expected to understand brief newspaper articles, advertisements or any other similar short (authentic) texts related to the topic areas described in the test specifications. There are usually 3–4 separate tasks; one task may include several short texts. The questions concentrate on the comprehension of the main points and the most important details. Several task types are used on each testing occasion (constructed response and selected response).

WRITING

Candidates are expected to write informal and semi-informal letters or messages. Topics vary from writing letters to contacting companies for various purposes. The main requirement for a successful accomplishment of the task is to convey the message to the reader as comprehensibly and naturally as possible.

There are 2–3 tasks, each relatively short, which aim to simulate tasks the candidates might encounter in real-life situations.

STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY

The candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of Finnish structures and vocabulary at this level. The tasks are mainly contextualised, but when appropriate, decontextualised task-types may also be used.

This subtest contains 4–6 tasks, including multiple choice, gap-filling, elaboration.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand short dialogues or radio programmes/ announcements spoken at a normal or at times slightly moderated tempo.

The test takes place in a language laboratory, and there are usually 3–4 tasks. Several task types, both constructed response and selected response, are used.

SPEAKING

Candidates are expected to express themselves orally as naturally and effectively as possible in situations that simulate real-life functions at the appropriate level.

This subtest is conducted either face to face or in a language laboratory. There are usually three separate tasks that aim to tap different kinds of oral skills (e.g. reactions in situations, more extended speech).

Weighting of components

An overall grade is given on the basis of the grades obtained from each subtest. The overall mark is usually the mode of the subtest level marks.

Results

Results are given using skill levels 1–5; 'below 1' if the candidate has not been able meet the criteria set for level 1.

SUOMEN KIELI YLIN TASO

Ylin taso, the advanced level test, is aimed at skill levels 5–8 (on the 9-level scale). This test is suited for adults whose language skills match challenging tasks such as representing the workplace in specialist matters. These people can adjust their language according to the demands of the situation, and they understand writing and speech on common topics and in their area of specialization with relative ease. They can also convey the shades and nuances of meaning accurately. The advanced level test is for people who feel comfortable about using Finnish in various, even demanding, situations.

The National Certificate ylin taso test consists of five subtests:

1. Reading comprehension (1 hour)
2. Writing (1 hour)
3. Structures and vocabulary (1 hour)
4. Listening comprehension (approx. 30 minutes)
5. Speaking (approx. 20 minutes plus 15 minutes).

The total test time is about 4–5 hours.

READING

Candidates are expected to understand all kinds of (authentic) texts related to the topic areas specified in the test specifications.

There are usually 3 or 4 separate tasks; one task may include several texts. Several task types are used on each testing occasion (open-ended questions, summary, multiple-choice etc).

WRITING

Candidates are expected to write informal and formal letters, such as messages (e.g. a fax), application forms, letters to newspapers, CVs, and to provide an argumentative or expository treatment of a given topic. The main requirement for successful accomplishment of a task is to convey the message to the reader as naturally and effectively as possible.

There are 2 or 3 tasks, which simulate tasks the candidates may encounter in real-life situations.

STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of Finnish structures and vocabulary. The tasks are mainly contextualised, but when appropriate, decontextualised task types may be used.

This subtest contains 4–6 tasks, including (for example) multiple-choice, gap-filling, elaboration, translation.

LISTENING

Candidates are expected to understand different kinds of spoken language, e.g. radio programmes/lectures spoken at a normal speed. The test takes place in a language laboratory, and there are usually 3 or 4 tasks. A variety of task types, such as summary, gap-filling or open-ended questions are used.

SPEAKING

Candidates are expected to express themselves orally as naturally and effectively as possible in situations that simulate real-life functions. This subtest is conducted both face to face and in a language laboratory. There are usually 4 separate tasks that aim at tapping different kinds of oral skills (e.g. reactions – situations, extended speech).

Weighting of components

An overall grade is given on the basis of the grades obtained from each subtest. The overall mark is usually the mode of the subtest level marks.

Results

Results are given using skill levels 5–8. 'Below 5' is awarded if the candidate has not been able meet the criteria set for level 5.

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SVENSKA
Stockholms Universitet, Institutionen för nordiska språk

Stockholm University, founded in 1878, is a body corporate. Swedish as a Foreign/Second Language has been taught at the university since 1947.

The Department of Scandinavian Languages at Stockholm University in co-operation with the Universities of Gothenburg, Linkoping, Lund, Umeå and Uppsala is responsible for producing, analysing and developing TISUS (Test in Swedish for University Studies). It covers ALTE levels 4–5. Level 4 gives eligibility to university studies in Sweden.

The Department of Scandinavian Languages is negotiating with other interested parties to produce similar tests for business/work purposes. These parties would then form a Swedish Language Testing Consortium.

The examination presented in this paper is TISUS. TISUS supersedes *Riksprovet* since October 1997.

The examination can be taken six times a year at the six universities in Sweden.

Examples of materials can be found at:

http://www.nordiska.su.se

For further information about the availability of TISUS, registration procedures, fees and dates, please contact:

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EXAMINATION SYSTEM

SETTING AND PRETESTING

1.1 Selection of materials

The test constructors select authentic materials from a variety of sources which include general academic literature (course books), newspaper articles, scientific magazines, diagrams, maps, encyclopedias etc.

1.2 Test item writing

Item writing and construction is carried out by practising teachers who also participate in the process of pretesting and recursive editing.

1.3 Pretesting

The reading component is pretested on about 200 students. Each item is subsequently analysed in order to provide statistics on discrimination and difficulty before being added to the test bank containing six parallel tests. The test bank is continuously upgraded with new components and old tests are discarded.

Prompts for the oral and written parts are also tried out and marked.

Marking

2.1 Process

Objective tests are marked clerically. The oral and written parts are marked by two or (if needed) three teachers functioning as Assessors.

2.2 Training

As TISUS is given six times a year the Assessor receives feedback every time from his/her Co-Assessor locally.

Once a year representatives from all six universities participate in training sessions and discussions about assessment of oral and written production.

2.3 Checking

The Oral Assessors work in pairs taking turns to act as Interlocutor and Assessor. Grades are reported and printed out after each examination round for all the Assessors to see and check on how their individual assessment matches with that of the others.

Results

There are two grades: Pass and Fail. Candidates who pass receive, within ten days, a certificate of eligibility. A candidate who fails one component can try that part again within a year.

Candidates who fail the written or the oral examination or both can, on request, discuss their result with one of the examining teachers.

Security

The test bank is kept under security regulations.

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TISUS (TEST IN SWEDISH FOR UNIVERSITY STUDIES)

TISUS is recognised by all the universities in Sweden as a statement of eligibility regarding Swedish language proficiency. It is an examination at advanced level and designed according to the expressed needs of students and university teachers.

There are three components:

READING (60 MIN)

Candidates read three texts testing different kinds of comprehension. The questions require understanding of vocabulary, context and overall content.

WRITING (120 MIN)

Candidates produce two different texts. Prompted by diagrams and short texts, students have to discuss, argue, describe or compare issues raised in the texts. Guidelines are given, e.g. purpose, genre and recipient. Total length of expected output is about 400 words.

SPEAKING (30 MIN)

Candidates are tested individually by two teachers one acting as Interlocuter and the other as Assessor. Candidates begin by introducing themselves as they would in a real life interview. The interaction which follows is based on both visual and textual prompts. Probing questions are asked by the Interlocuter in order to elicit descriptions, arguments, hypotheses and analyses.

The use of communicative strategies is regarded as an important part of the interaction.

Weighting of components

Each component is equally weighted.

If a candidate fails one component it is possible to sit that part of the examination again within a period of one year.

Results

There are two grades: Pass (Godkänd) and Fail (Underkänd). Successful candidates are awarded certificates.

7. GLOSSARY

ACCREDITATION

The granting of recognition of a test, usually by an official body such as a government department, examinations board, etc.

ADMINISTRATION

The date or period during which a test takes place. Many tests have a fixed date of administration several times a year, while others may be administered on demand.

ANCHOR ITEM

An item which is included in two or more tests. Anchor items have known characteristics, and form one section of a new version of a test in order to provide information about that test and the candidates who have taken it, e.g. to calibrate a new test to a measurement scale.

ASSESSOR

Someone who assigns a score to a candidate's performance in a test, using subjective judgement to do so. Assessors are normally qualified in the relevant field, and are required to undergo a process of training and standardisation. In oral testing the roles of Assessor and Interlocutor are sometimes distinguished. Also referred to as Examiner or Rater.

CALIBRATION

The process of determining the scale of a test or tests. Calibration may involve anchoring items from different tests to a common difficulty scale (the theta scale). When a test is constructed from calibrated items, then scores on the test indicate the candidates' ability, i.e. their location on the theta scale.

CLERICAL MARKING

A method of marking in which Markers do not need to exercise any special expertise or subjective judgement. They mark by following a mark scheme which specifies all acceptable responses to each test item.

COMMUNICATIVE TASK / ACTIVITY

A classroom or examination exercise which involves or tests an individual's ability to deal with a communication event.

COMPONENT

Part of an examination, often presented as a separate test, with its own instruction booklet and time limit. Components are often skills-based, and have titles such as Listening Comprehension or Composition. Also referred to as subtest.

COMPUTERISED MARKING (SCORING)

Various ways of using computer systems to minimise error in the marking of objective tests. For example, this can be done by scanning information from the candidate's mark sheet by means of an optical mark reader, and producing data which can be used to provide scores or analyses.

CONJUNCTION

A word used to connect clauses or sentences or words in the same clause: for example and, but, if.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

A means of describing and analysing the content of test materials. This analysis is necessary in order to ensure that the content of the test meets its specification. It is essential in establishing content and construct validity.

DESCRIPTOR

A brief description accompanying a band on a rating scale, which summarises the degree of proficiency or type of performance expected for a candidate to achieve that particular score.

DIRECTED WRITING TASK

See definition for Guided Writing Task.

DISCRETE ITEM

A self-contained item. It is not linked to a text, other items or any supplementary material. An example of an item type used in this way is multiple-choice.

DISCRIMINATION

The power of an item to discriminate between weaker and stronger candidates. Various indices of discrimination are used. Some (e.g. point-biserial, biserial) are based on a correlation between the score on the item and a criterion, such as total score on the test or some external measure of proficiency. Others are based on the difference in the item's difficulty for low and high ability groups. In item response theory the 2 and 3 parameter models estimate item discrimination as the A-parameter.

DISCURSIVE COMPOSITION

A writing task in which the candidate has to discuss a topic on which various views can be held, or argue in support of personal opinions.

DOUBLE MARKING

A method of assessing performance in which two individuals independently assess candidate performance on a test.

EDITING

The process by which examination materials submitted by item writers are modified and put into the form in which they will appear on an examination paper.

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EXAMINER

Refer to definition for Assessor.

FACILITY INDEX

The proportion of correct responses to an item, expressed on a scale of 0 to 1. It is also sometimes expressed as a percentage. Also referred to as facility value or p-value.

GAP-FILLING ITEM

Any type of item which requires the candidate to insert some written material – letters, numbers, single words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs – into spaces in a text. The response may be supplied by the candidate or selected from a set of options.

GRADE

A test score may be reported to the candidate as a grade, for example on a scale of A to E, where A is the highest grade available, B is a good pass, C a pass and D and E are failing grades.

GRADING

The process of converting test scores or marks into grades.

GUIDED WRITING TASK

A task which involves the candidate in the production of a written text, where graphic or textual information, such as pictures, letters, postcards and instructions, is used to control and standardise the expected response.

INFORMATION TRANSFER

A technique of testing which involves taking information given in a certain form and presenting it in a different form. Examples of such tasks are: taking information from a text and using it to label a diagram; rewriting an informal note as a formal announcement.

INTERVAL SCALE

A scale of measurement on which the distance between any two adjacent units of measurement is the same, but in which there is no absolute zero point.

INTONATION

The tone given to words with the effect that, for example, a question can be distinguished from a statement.

ITEM

Each testing point in a test which is given a separate mark or marks. Examples are: one gap in a cloze test; one multiple-choice question with three or four options; one sentence for grammatical transformation; one question to which a sentence-length response is expected.

ITEM BANKING

An approach to the management of test items which entails storing information about items so that tests of known content and difficulty can be constructed. Normally, the approach makes use of a computer database, and is based on latent trait theory, which means that items can be related to each other by means of a common difficulty scale.

ITEM RESPONSE THEORY

A group of mathematical models for relating an individual's test performance to that individual's level of ability. These models are based on the fundamental theory that an individual's expected performance on a particular test question, or item, is a function of both the level of difficulty of the item and the individual's level of ability.

LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (LSP)

Language teaching or testing which focuses on the area of language used for a particular activity or profession; for example, English for Air Traffic Control, Spanish for Commerce.

LEXIS

A term used to refer to vocabulary.

LINK ITEM

Refer to definition for Anchor Item.

MARK

The outcome of an examination, often expressed as a percentage. Because of adjustments such as heavier weighting for some items, the mark is not always the same as the total score.

MARKER

Someone who assigns a score to a candidate's responses to a written test. This may involve the use of expert judgement or, in the case of a clerical Marker, the relatively unskilled application of a mark scheme.

MARKING

Assigning a mark to a candidate's responses to a test. This may involve professional judgement, or the application of a mark scheme which lists all acceptable responses.

MARK SCHEME

A list of all the acceptable responses to the items in a test. A mark scheme makes it possible for a Marker to assign a score to a test accurately.

MATCHING TASK

A test type which involves bringing together elements from two separate lists. One kind of matching test consists of selecting the

correct phrase to complete each of a number of unfinished sentences. A type used in tests of reading comprehension involves choosing from a list something like a holiday or a book to suit a person whose particular requirements are described.

MEASUREMENT

Generally, the process of finding the amount of something by comparison with a fixed unit, e.g. using a ruler to measure length. In the social sciences, measurement often refers to the quantification of characteristics of persons, such as language proficiency.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE GAP-FILLING

A type of test item in which the candidate's task is to select from a set of options the correct word or phrase to insert into a space in a text.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEM

A type of test item which consists of a question or incomplete sentence (stem), with a choice of answers or ways of completing the sentence. The candidate's task is to choose the correct option (key) from a set of three, four or five possibilities, and no production of language is involved. For this reason, multiple-choice items are normally used in tests of reading and listening. They may be discrete or text-based.

MULTIPLE-MATCHING TASK

A test task in which a number of questions or sentence completion items, generally based on a reading text, are set. The responses are provided in the form of a bank of words or phrases, each of which can be used an unlimited number of times. The advantage is that options are not removed as the candidate works through the items (as with other forms of matching) so that the task does not become progressively easier.

NARRATIVE TEXT

A text in which a story is told or events recounted.

OBJECTIVE TEST

A test which can be scored by applying a mark scheme, without the need to bring expert opinion or subjective judgement to the task.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

A type of item or task in a written test which requires the candidate to supply, as opposed to select, a response. The purpose of this kind of item is to elicit a relatively unconstrained response, which may vary in length from a few words to an extended essay. The mark scheme therefore allows for a range of acceptable answers.

OPTICAL MARK READER (OMR)

An electronic device used for scanning information directly from mark sheets or answer sheets. Candidates or Examiners can mark item responses or tasks on a mark sheet and this information can be directly read into the computer. Also referred to as scanner.

PAPER CONSTRUCTION

The process of selecting the items which will make up an examination paper, and adding rubrics and an answer key.

PREPOSITION

A word which expresses the relationship between a noun or pronoun and another word; for example on, with, for.

PRETESTING

A stage in the development of test materials at which items are tried out with representative samples from the target population in order to determine their difficulty. Following statistical analysis, those items that are considered satisfactory can be used in live tests.

PROMPT

In tests of speaking or writing, graphic materials or texts designed to elicit a response from the candidate.

PROOF-READING TASK

A test task which involves checking a text for errors of a specified type, e.g. spelling or structure. Part of the task may also consist of marking errors and supplying correct forms.

QUESTION

Sometimes used to refer to a test task or item.

RASCH MODEL

A mathematical model, also known as the simple logistic model, which posits a relationship between the probability of a person completing a task and the difference between the ability of the person and the difficulty of the task. Mathematically equivalent to the one-parameter model in item response theory. The Rasch model has been extended in various ways, e.g. to handle scalar responses or multiple facets accounting for the 'difficulty' of a task.

RAW SCORE

A test score that has not been statistically manipulated by any transformation, weighting or re-scaling.

REGISTER

A distinct variety of speech or writing characteristic of a particular activity or a particular degree of formality.

ROLE PLAY

A task type which is sometimes used in speaking tests in which

candidates have to imagine themselves in a specific situation or adopt specific roles.

RUBRIC

The instructions given to candidates to guide their responses to a particular test task.

SCALE

A set of numbers or categories for measuring something. Four types of measurement scale are distinguished – nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio.

SCALE DESCRIPTOR

Refer to definition for Descriptor.

SCAN

To read something quickly, in order to look for a specific piece of information or answer to a question. A scanning exercise often consists of questions placed before a text.

SCRIPT

The paper containing a candidate's responses to a test, used particularly of open-ended task types.

SEMI-AUTHENTIC TEXT

A text taken from a real-life source that has been edited for use in a test, e.g. to adapt the vocabulary and/or grammar to the level of the candidates.

SENTENCE COMPLETION

An item type in which only half of a sentence is given. The candidate's task is to complete the sentence, either by supplying suitable words (possibly based on the reading of a text) or by choosing them from various options given.

SENTENCE TRANSFORMATION

An item type in which a complete sentence is given as a prompt, followed by the first one or two words of a second sentence which expresses the content of the first in a different grammatical form. For example, the first sentence may be active, and the candidate's task is to present the identical content in passive form.

SETTING

The whole process by which examination materials are produced and papers constructed.

SKIM

To read rapidly so that the main point is understood, although details will be missed.

SPECIFICATIONS

A description of the characteristics of an examination, including what is tested, how it is tested, details such as number and length of papers, item types used, etc.

STRESS

The emphasis put on a syllable or word in spoken language.

STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Structural competence refers to an individual's ability in and knowledge of the grammatical structures of a language.

SYLLABUS

A detailed document which lists all the areas covered in a particular programme of study, and the order in which content is presented.

SYNONYM

Two words which mean the same, or almost the same, as each other: for example, 'shut the door' and 'close the door'.

SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES

The grammatical structures of language.

'TABLE-TOP' MARKING

A method of marking examination papers which involves gathering all the Markers together to mark for a limited period of time, rather than sending papers out to be marked by people in their own homes.

TASK

A combination of rubric, input and response. For example, a reading text with several multiple-choice items, all of which can be responded to by referring to a single rubric.

TEST METHOD CHARACTERISTICS

The defining characteristics of different test methods. These may include environment, rubric, language of instructions, format, etc.

TEXT

A piece of connected discourse, written or spoken, used as the basis for a set of test items.

THRESHOLD LEVEL

An influential specification in functional terms of a basic level of foreign language competence, published by the Council of Europe in 1976 for English, and updated in 1990. Versions have since been produced for a number of European languages.

TRANSFORMATION ITEM

Refer to definition for sentence transformation.

UTTERANCE

A chain of spoken words.

VETTING

A stage in the cycle of test production at which the test developers assess materials commissioned from item writers and decide which should be rejected as not fulfilling the specifications of the test, and which can go forward to the editing stage.

WAYSTAGE LEVEL

A specification of an elementary level of foreign language competence first published by the Council of Europe in 1977 for English and revised in 1990. It provides a less demanding objective than Threshold, being estimated to have approximately half the Threshold learning load.

WEIGHTING

The assignment of a different number of maximum points to a test item, task or component in order to change its relative contribution in relation to other parts of the same test. For example, if double marks are given to all the items in Task One of a test, Task One will account for a greater proportion of the total score than other tasks.

WORD FORMATION

An item type where the candidate has to produce a form of a word based on another form of the same word which is given as input.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on ALTE, copies of ALTE newsletters and the documents listed below can be obtained by contacting the following address:

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ALTE Document 3:
The ALTE Code of Practice

ALTE Document 4:
The ALTE Framework

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